

PR 5059  
.M45 Z7  
Copy 1

# LORD MORLEY'S CRITICISM OF ENGLISH POETRY AND PROSE

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE

FACULTY OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

JAMES DOW McCALLUM



# LORD MORLEY'S CRITICISM OF ENGLISH POETRY AND PROSE

A DISSERTATION

PRESENTED TO THE  
FACULTY OF PRINCETON UNIVERSITY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY  
JAMES DOW McCALLUM

1921

PR 5059  
.M45Z7

ACCEPTED JUNE, 1921  
BY THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

Gift  
University  
SEP 16 1921

## CHAPTER I

### MORLEY'S CRITICISM OF ENGLISH POETRY

During the last half of the nineteenth century a new type of literary criticism in accordance with the principles of the evolutionary theory was exceedingly prevalent in certain quarters. The exponents of this scientific criticism were forward in maintaining its validity; they announced it as a type that was to supersede the efforts of earlier critics. It was final and infallible.

A summary of the functions of this comparatively recent type of criticism has been given by J. A. Symonds: "Classical criticism rested upon a logical basis. It assumed the existence of certain fixed principles, from which correct judgments might be deduced. Romantic criticism substituted sympathies and antipathies for rules, and exchanged authority for personal opinion. Scientific criticism proceeds by induction, historical investigation, morphological analysis, misdoubting the certainty of aesthetic principles, regarding the instincts and sensibilities of the individual with distrust, seeking materials for basing the canons of perfection upon some positive foundation." Symonds has given a case in point: "A certain type of literature or art manifests itself, apparently by casual occurrence, in a nation at a given epoch. If favorable conditions for its development are granted, it runs a well-defined course in which every stage is connected with preceding and succeeding stages by no merely accidental link; and when all the resources of the type have been exhausted, it comes to a natural end, and nothing but débris is left of it," etc. Symonds proceeds to apply the theory to Elizabethan and Attic drama, and to sculpture. His discussions of these forms of art are so brief that a criticism of the value of his method, as exemplified by his application, would not be just.<sup>1</sup>

The same principles have been applied, however, by a writer

<sup>1</sup> Essays, Speculative and Suggestive, vol. 1—"On Some Principles of Criticism."

of greater attainments, the French critic, Brunetière. By his method Brunetière wishes to trace the development of originally simple material into the complex by means of a selection of those writings which have added something to their type. He finds it necessary to establish the existence of a species, to understand how it was differentiated into other species, to discuss fixation and stability, as well as other problems involved in the evolutionary theory. There is, he says, a filiation that may be traced in literature just as there is a filiation in the natural world; and the chronological and genealogical methods are more valuable in establishing the line of descent than is the descriptive method. Criticism, Brunetière claims, may be made a science. It may be so organized that we can classify and systematise our literature, but we must first realize that personal criticism is of no weight; it is haphazard, uneven, and carries the authority only of the critic.

Had Brunetière adhered strictly to the phraseology of the introduction, the main part of the *Évolution des Genres* would be without the charm which it possesses; but he has fortunately omitted the technicalities of the theory. His discussion of the development of French criticism is masterly and discreet. The limitations of method, however, suggest two objections; and I may be permitted to raise them without adopting the mocking tone which, according to Brunetière, is common with critics who reject any attempt to classify and label works of art.

The first objection is this. The scientific method displaces philosophic criticism. A critic judging according to the formulas which Symonds and Brunetière have posited does not admit that any branch of philosophy may be taken as a standard, and a work evaluated according as it exemplifies and enforces the tenets of that philosophy. This omission is the more remarkable because there have been periods which were dominated by the existing philosophy, periods in which literature reflected philosophic influence to an unwonted degree.

There is a second objection. In all well-rounded criticism there is one element that is indispensable—the expression of intuitive taste. But it is not to be expected that a writer who is hampered by an exact, scientific formula will be able to furnish this expression. I believe that any criticism which limits an author in this regard or which sets aside as of trifling value any record of intuitive taste is markedly defective.

The philosophy which Lord Morley represents, that of rationalism, was of particular importance during the same period that fostered the evolutionary theory. The close relation between rationalism and the evolutionary theory is too well-known to require discussion here; but their applications in criticism are widely different. Whereas Brunetière was concerned primarily with tracing the growth of types, Morley has kept constantly before himself the principles of his philosophy. He must know what contributions have been made to human progress. He must know in what frame of mind a position was maintained, whether open-mindedly or with vision stubbornly limited and obscured; whether the writer whom he criticizes was deliberate and cautious, or characterized by vague generalising and prejudice.

A standard that was limited to such considerations as these, however, would be subject to the second objection which I have advanced against scientific criticism. Fortunately, Morley has not excluded the valuable criticism which an expression of taste affords. There is evidence that rationalism has not been so inhibitory in this respect as we might be led to believe. His approval of all those authors or men of affairs who have aided mankind has allowed him to exhibit a catholicity of taste that is remarkable. And as a corollary to this taste, which is perhaps synonymous with judgment, he has given expression to that more subtle intuitive taste without which literary criticism is bald and dessicated; by means of it Morley has attained to that "high and excellent seriousness" which Arnold has praised as the unfailing mark of genius.

It is conceivable that critics of Morley have overlooked his contribution to literary criticism. The authors of the comparatively few and brief articles on his work have generally been so concerned with his rationalistic point of view or with his political career, that they have diverted attention from the type of criticism to which he has given expression. A final estimate in regard to his position in the nineteenth century is of course not to be expected at the present time. I shall consider my task completed if I can show that rationalism when applied to literary criticism furnishes a standard by which a rigorous, definite selection is possible. We may thus consider Morley's standard scientific. On the other hand, there is evidence in his writings of a finer taste than a critic could display

were he wholly scientific. My second point will be, accordingly, that Morley has shown proof not only of a discriminating but of an intuitive taste.

Rationalists of the nineteenth century are commonly considered incapable of appreciating poetry. Opinions from writers of their own school are cited to their disadvantage. Against them is quoted the statement by Bentham that an equal amount of pleasure is afforded by pushpin and poetry. It is further remembered that Bentham distinguished prose from poetry by observing that the one runs out to the margin and the other does not. Furthermore, the critic remembers that James Mill was not kindly disposed toward poetry, and that his son, J. S. Mill, only tardily found pleasure in it.

A hasty judge of Mill and his followers finds little in their thought besides dialectic, positivistic certainty, and scientific classification. The conclusion is to a certain extent warranted. The titles, themselves, the "Rationalistic School" and the "Utilitarians," are significant of close thinking and of practical application. The bulk of their literature is given over to discussions of actual human relationships, of actual situations. The critic also advances that the outburst of science in the past century was the result of the type of thinking which the rationalists advocated.

The conclusion then is to a certain extent warranted; but even a cursory examination will show that the judgment is incomplete. There is more to rationalistic thought than has been indicated. That J. S. Mill was aware of this fact is evident in a letter written by him to E. Lytton Bulwer.<sup>2</sup> The supporters of the *London and Westminster Review*, Mill states, ought to represent the utilitarianism "which holds in the highest reverence all which the vulgar notion of utilitarianism represents them to despise—which holds feeling at least as valuable as thought, and Poetry not only on a par with, but the necessary condition of, any true and comprehensive Philosophy." I shall have to consider later and at some length Mill's attitude. It is my purpose in the following discussion to call attention to certain elements in the philosophy of a rationalist by means of which he is qualified to be a sympathetic critic of

<sup>2</sup> Letters of John Stuart Mill, vol. 1, p. 104.



poetry, to show that there are ideals which stimulate his imagination and attune his mind into a mood receptive of the aspirations of the poets. In particular I shall be concerned with the bearing of these ideals on Morley's criticism of the Romantic poets, because it is of them that he has written at greatest length.

The most idealistic element is the belief in progress. Morley states definitely that rationalism has enforced this belief on the nineteenth century. It would be unjust, he writes, to claim that reasoned interest in social improvement is incompatible with a spiritualistic doctrine, but we are justified in saying that an energetic faith in the possibilities of social progress has been first reached through the philosophy of sensation and experience.<sup>3</sup> This conviction occurs to him as startlingly new. The master minds of past ages were without it; "scouring a library, you come across a little handful of fugitive and dubious sentences" which express faith in human progress. Even among the eighteenth century writers, Morley remarks with surprise, it was unknown.<sup>4</sup> "Rousseau actually thought the history of civilization a record of the fall of man."<sup>5</sup>

References in Morley's writings to progress are innumerable. He considers it the basis of social thought, and he believes that it has taken the place even of a religion as the inspiring, guiding, and testing power of social action.<sup>6</sup> "It is only the faith that we are moving slowly away from the existing order," he states, "as our ancestors moved slowly away from the old want of order, that makes the present endurable, and any tenacious effort to raise the future possible."<sup>7</sup> There are references to the "ceaseless forward tramp of humanity,"<sup>8</sup> and, in a melancholy tone, to the too scanty list of those who have essayed the great and hardy task of reconciling order with progress.<sup>9</sup> So firm is Morley in this belief that he writes, in the phraseology of the intuitive school, of the necessity for

<sup>3</sup> Diderot, vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>4</sup> Misc. vol. 4, p. 298.

<sup>5</sup> *Idem*, p. 299. See Rousseau, vol. 1, p. 147, for same idea.

<sup>6</sup> Recollections, vol. 1, p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Rousseau, vol. 1, p. 186.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, p. 241.

<sup>9</sup> Burke, p. 255.

“faith in the beneficent powers and processes of the Unseen Time.”<sup>10</sup>

The second element in Morley's philosophy by means of which he is enabled to sympathize with Romantic poetry is the insistence on individualism. A thorough discussion of this phase of rationalism would lead us into a consideration of the philosophy in all its ramifications. Individualism is even more important to the rationalist than is progress, because it is by preaching the necessity for individual expansion that he expects his type of millennium to be hastened. I shall limit myself, therefore, to a few references.

It will be recalled that Mill in his essay *On Liberty* took as his theme the “nature and limits of the power which can be legitimately exercised by society over the individual.” The discussion which he gives is too well-known to demand any treatment here. It seems probable that Morley was induced by a study of the essay to write his own thoughts on the subject in *On Compromise*. He has emphasized not so much the limits of society's authority as the obligations of the individual in three given situations: the forming of an opinion, the expressing of it, and the acting on it. “No Compromise” is the general theme. Ideas must be followed to their conclusions without fear of the consequences; the time is always ripe for the expressing of an idea, but action is not always so free or timely. Morley would restrict freedom of action to self-regarding acts, as does Mill, but admits the difficulty of defining such acts.

The propositions advanced in the two treatises just mentioned express all that is most vigorous in the rationalist's doctrine of individualism, as understood by Mill and Morley. One may find in each treatise a fairly complete statement of the views of the respective authors. That Morley realized the difficulties to which the doctrine might lead can be demonstrated. Let us notice that he was fully aware of the dangers inherent in this phase of his philosophy.

We are too likely to forget, he writes, in our emphasis upon individuality that we are dependent upon our predecessors for our heritage. Man is subordinate to time; the past has cut the groove. “Only too familiar is the exaggerated and mis-shapen

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 312.

rationalism that shuts out imagination, distrusts all sentiment, despises tradition, and makes short work alike of the past, and of anything like collective or united faith and belief in the present.”<sup>11</sup> He writes approvingly of Burke’s belief, that “if you encourage every individual to let the imagination loose on all subjects, without any restraint from a sense of his own weakness and subordinate rank in the long scheme of things, then there is nothing of all the opinion of ages has agreed to regard as excellent and venerable, which would not be exposed to destruction at the hands of rationalistic criticism.”<sup>12</sup> The French revolutionists did not know this; they failed to realize what was owing to the past. Consequently, although they were animated by some of the most powerful convictions, by a belief in progress, in justice, in the brotherhood of man, yet they seemed to have been paralyzed whenever they essayed any great incorporation of their ideas in positive institutions, or even in extensive measures of destruction that required courage and faith. Furthermore, those who execrate the past indiscriminately are sure ultimately to distrust the future.<sup>13</sup> He believes still further that one of the permanent sides of Burke’s teaching is his respect for the “collective reason of mankind”; that the individual cannot be judged apart from the experience of the race. Still, he maintains, recurring to his favorite thought, that we shall profit little if we accept the plenary inspiration of majorities.<sup>14</sup> It is a mark of the highest intelligence when a man has learned how little the effort of the individual can do either to hasten or direct the current of human destiny, and yet finds in effort his pleasure and his most constant duty. It does not matter so much what a man has done, but how he has tried.<sup>15</sup> In the world’s final estimate, he writes, character goes farther than act, imagination than utility, and its leaders strike us as much by what they were, as by what they did.

There is another point which might be considered with profit. A rationalist is fond of details; he prefers direct observation to the vagueness of theoretical possibilities. Keen-

<sup>11</sup> Notes on Politics and History, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> Burke, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*, p. 279.

<sup>14</sup> On Compromise, p. 118.

<sup>15</sup> Walpole, p. 114.

ness of observation is his particular virtue. With facts before him, he feels justified in forming his deductions. The rationalist, therefore, is likely to be attracted to poetry not only because he enjoys the moral sentiments and the expression of individuality, but also because he finds in it a vivid and extensive portrayal of actualities.

These, then, are some of the principles by means of which a rationalist may approach poetry. But it is not necessary to rest the case on an a priori argument. The leading rationalist of the century has furnished us, both in the *Autobiography* and in his essay on poetry, with valuable statements of his attitude. Let us review the account which Mill has given of his appreciation of poetry, before we consider the essay.

As early as 1828 Mill had become aware of the power of poetry.<sup>16</sup> Having previously to that date found emotional stimulus in music, but believing that its appeal was conditioned by its novelty, he became "tormented by the thought of the exhaustibility of musical combinations," like "the philosophers of Laputa, who feared lest the sun should be burnt out." Dejection set in. The problems of life were weighing heavily upon him. As a last resort he turned to poetry, and found in it his remedy. He read Byron, but learned to his disappointment that the poet's state of mind was too like his own. Each found life a "vapid, uninteresting thing"—the poet, because he had exhausted all its pleasures, the logician because he had abstained too rigorously from them. Byron consequently was rejected.

The next poet to be tried was Wordsworth, and in him Mill found what he desired. The poet's love of rural objects and scenery was in the first place attractive. But what made Wordsworth of value to Mill, a "medicine for my state of mind," was his expression of "states of feeling, and of thought colored by feeling, under the excitement of beauty." From him Mill learned that "there was real permanent happiness in tranquil contemplation." The delight which the poems gave him proved that "there was nothing to dread from the most confirmed habit of analysis."

It is of interest as an indication of the wide scope which rationalism affords to individual thought and feeling to notice

<sup>16</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 144 ff.

the sequel to this discovery.<sup>17</sup> Mill recommended Wordsworth to his rationalistic friend Roebuck, and in so doing took exception to Byron, "both as a poet and as to his influence on the character." Seemingly Roebuck preferred action and struggle to tranquil contemplation, because he believed that Byron's writings were the "poetry of human life," whereas Wordsworth's poetry treated of "flowers and butterflies." Roebuck, Mill tells further, was in many ways "different from the vulgar notion of a Benthamite or Utilitarian." Instead of being devoid of feeling, as Benthamites are supposed to be, he was very sensible of emotional appeal. He would not admit, however, that music, painting, and poetry have any value as aids in the forming of character, and so the matter had to be carried to the debating society. The situation is peculiar: J. S. Mill bringing dialectic to bear on the importance of feeling as a formative influence, and Roebuck, another rationalist, championing the value of poetic expressions of feeling per se. The result of the debate we do not know.

Not only has Mill given a detailed account of his approach to poetry, but he has also expressed at some length his opinions on the nature of poetry. *Thoughts on Poetry and Its Varieties*<sup>18</sup> was published originally in 1833, three years after the author had met Mrs. Taylor. Of her influence he has given testimony in the *Autobiography* as well as in the dedicatory preface to the essay *On Liberty*. Undoubtedly she did stimulate emotionally the mind of the logician; we are reminded of a similar situation between Clothilde de Vaux and Comte. But even in 1828, as we have seen, Mill was turning to poetry. We must, therefore, while admitting the great extent of Mrs. Taylor's influence, remember that Mill had felt the need of the emotional appeal of poetry at least two years before his acquaintance with her.

The problem of the essay referred to is the distinction between poetry and metrical composition. "The object of poetry," Mill writes, is "confessedly to act on the emotions; and therein is poetry sufficiently distinguished from what Wordsworth affirms to be its logical opposite, namely, not prose, but matter of fact or science. The one addresses itself

<sup>17</sup> *Idem.* pp. 149 ff.

<sup>18</sup> *Dissertations*, vol. 1, pp. 63 ff.

to the belief, the other to the feelings. The one does its work by convincing or persuading, the other by moving. The one acts by presenting a proposition to the understanding, the other by offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities."

But a novel may appeal to the emotions, too! The difference in the appeal, however, adds to the definition of poetry. "In one the source of the emotion excited is the exhibition of a state or states of human sensibility; in the other, of a series of states of mere outward circumstances." The truth of poetry is the painting of the human soul truly; consequently, whoever describes accurately any human feeling, writes poetry. Mill feels justified in rejecting as poetry the narrative element in drama, epic, or ballad, although it is such a popular part of these types. To the many, Shakespeare is great as a storyteller, to the few, as a poet.

This restricting of poetry to the delineation of states of feeling would seem to eliminate descriptive verse from the high rank of poetry. Mill denies the charge. "The poetry is not in the object itself, nor in the scientific truth itself, but in the state of mind in which the one and the other may be contemplated." Thus, a poet may describe a lion, not as a naturalist would, but under the influence of awe, wonder, or terror. Apparently the lion is described, really the state of excitement of the beholder. The lion may even be described falsely and the poetry be all the better. If the human emotion be not accurately indicated, then the poet has failed to produce poetry.

But the author is not yet satisfied with his definition. He refers approvingly to two other definitions. Poetry is "impassioned truth," and poetry is "man's thoughts tinged by his feelings." It may be objected, though, that eloquence is also impassioned truth. Mill then draws a distinction in a very fine paragraph. "Poetry and eloquence are both alike the expression or utterance of feeling. But if we may be excused the antithesis, we should say that eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *overheard*. Eloquence supposes an audience; the peculiarity of poetry appears to us to lie in the poet's utter unconsciousness of a listener. Poetry is feeling confessing itself to itself, in moments of solitude, and embodying itself in symbols which are the nearest possible representations of the feeling in the exact shape in which it exists in the poet's mind. Eloquence

is feeling pouring itself out to other minds, courting their sympathy, or endeavouring to influence their belief or move them to passion or to action." "All poetry is of the nature of soliloquy." Mill's lapse into the phraseology of the school to which he was opposed is interesting: the poet "confines himself altogether to intuitive truths."

Whom then, Mill asks, shall we call poets? Every one may be and usually at some time of his life is a poet, because we all feel acutely at times, and the faithful recording of such feeling is poetry. The traditional opinion is given that poets excel in this intensity of feeling and in their ability to record it. Mill continues: "The difference then between the poetry of a poet, and the poetry of a cultivated but not naturally poetic mind, is, that in the latter, with however bright a halo of feeling the thought may be surrounded and glorified, the thought itself is always the conspicuous object; while the poetry of a poet is Feeling itself, employing Thought only as the medium of its expression. In the one feeling waits upon thought; in the other thought upon feeling." A man is a poet "not because he has ideas of any particular kind, but because the succession of his ideas is subordinate to the course of his emotions."

Mill's essay cannot be regarded as a manifesto of the nineteenth century rationalist's attitude toward poetry. Indeed, there is nothing in the essay which would indicate the position in philosophy of the author; the discussion might more readily have been the product of an intuitionist than of a rationalist. So true is this that a critic may justly condemn the one-sided point of view which Mill has revealed in the essay. There is too much insistence on emotion, as though the capacity for feeling were the only essential to the enjoyment of poetry. Nevertheless, the essay is of value because it overthrows at once the traditional idea in regard to the rationalist's evaluation of poetry.

There is no complete discussion from Morley of his views on poetry; but from many references, some of them quite full, we may arrive at his point of view. It is in a passage of the essay on Byron<sup>19</sup> that we find the most definite statement of Morley's approach: "Poetry, and not only poetry, but every

<sup>19</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 209.

other channel of emotional expression and aesthetic culture, confessedly moves with the general march of the human mind, and art is only the transformation into ideal and imaginative shapes of a predominant system and philosophy of life. Minor verse-writers may fairly be consigned, without disrespect, to the region of the literature of taste; and criticism of their work takes the shape of a discussion of stray graces, of new turns, of little variations of shade and colour, of their conformity to the accepted rules that constitute the technique of poetry. The loftier masters, though their technical power and originality, their beauty of form, strength of flight, music and variousness of rhythm, are full of interest and instruction, come to us with the size and quality of great historic forces, for they represent the hope and energies, the dreams and the consummation, of the human intelligence in its most enormous movements. To appreciate one of these, we need to survey it on every side. For these we need synthetic criticism, which, after analysis has done its work, and disclosed to us the peculiar qualities of form, conception, and treatment, shall collect the products of this first process, construct for us the poet's mental figure in its integrity and just coherence, and then finally, as the sum of its work, shall trace the relations of the poet's ideas, either direct or indirect, through the central currents of thought, to the visible tendencies of an existing age."

Before I consider the relation of this thought to Morley's criticism, I must refute the accusation that has been brought against him, namely, that he is a "puritan pulpiteer." I am obliged therefore to notice his attitude toward didactic poetry, and to verse that is usually considered "moral." A passage in the essay on the *Ring and the Book* deserves to be quoted:<sup>20</sup> "The truth is, we have for long been so debilitated by pastorals, by graceful presentation of the Arthurian legend for drawing rooms, by idylls, not robust and Theocritean, by verse directly didactic, that a rude blast of air from the outside welter of human realities is apt to give a shock, that might well show in what simpleton's paradise we have been living. The ethics of the rectory parlour set to sweet music, the respectable aspirations of the sentimental curate married to exquisite verse, the everlasting glorification of domestic sentiment in blameless

<sup>20</sup> Studies, p. 256.



princes and others, as if that were the poet's single province and the divinely-appointed end of all art, as if domestic sentiment included and summed up the whole throng of passions, emotions, strife, and desire; all this might seem to be making valetudinarians of us all. Our public is beginning to measure the right and possible in art by the superficial probabilities of life and manners within a ten-mile radius of Charing Cross." In the same essay he raises in order to answer it an objection against the *Ring and the Book*, namely, that its 21075 lines "do not seem to have any direct tendency to make us better or to improve mankind."<sup>21</sup> The objection, he considers, is an old enemy with a new face, the old application of a narrow moral standard. Some readers, Morley continues, who really love Shakespeare, are disappointed in not finding a moral code in the plays; nor can they hope to find such a code. But, he adds, "if we must be quantitative, one great creative poet probably exerts a nobler, deeper, more permanent ethical influence than a dozen generations of professed moral teachers"—"nothing can be more powerfully efficacious from the moral point of view than the exercise of an exalted creative art, stirring within the intelligence of the spectator active thought and curiosity about many types of character and many changeful issues of conduct and fortune, at once enlarging and elevating the range of his reflections on mankind, ever kindling his sympathies into the warm and continuous glow which purifies and strengthens nature, and fills men with that love of humanity which is the best inspirer of virtue." We are prepared for Morley's definition of "moral": "Given a certain rectitude as well as vigour of intelligence, then whatever stimulates the fancy, expands the imagination, enlivens meditation upon the great human drama, is essentially moral."<sup>22</sup> Wordsworth's opinion, that "every poet is a teacher" is therefore subject to important limitations. It may be doubted whether "it is any more the essential business of a poet to be a teacher than it was the business of Handel, Beethoven, or Mozart. They attune the soul to high states of feeling; the direct lesson is often as nought."<sup>23</sup>

Morley records a conversation in which Mill made the ob-

<sup>21</sup> *Studies*, p. 268.

<sup>22</sup> *Idem*, pp. 268-269.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, pp. 34-35.

jection to Victor Hugo that "he has not brought forward one single practical proposal for the improvement of the society against which he is incessantly thundering."<sup>24</sup> In rebuttal Morley urged that "it is unreasonable to ask a poet to draft acts of parliament; and that by bringing all the strength of his imagination and all the majestic fulness of his sympathy to bear on the social horrors and injustices which still lie so thick about us, he kindled an inextinguishable fire in the hearts of men of weaker initiative and less imperial gifts alike of imagination and sympathy, and so prepared the forces out of which practical proposals and specific improvements may be expected to issue." That Mill was unable previously to see the force of such sympathy only shows, adds Morley, how averse he was from dissociating "emotion from rationally directed effort."

Thus we see that, although Morley is opposed to poetry that is directly didactic, he does not believe that poetry should be denied the power of a formative moral influence. To be sure, he objects to Wordsworth's opinion that the poet is a teacher, and he takes exception to those who desire a moral code in Shakespeare or in Browning, and to Mill's wish that Hugo had brought forward some practical proposals for reforming mankind; but the objections are based on the immediacy and obviousness of the lesson which is sought. Morley, however, does not view poetry apart from its moulding influence; poetry stimulates meditation, exerts a stronger ethical force than the efforts of professed teachers, and inspires virtue.

We have seen that Mill emphasized the expression of feeling in poetry. Morley places thought first, and feeling second. This attitude is the more characteristic of the rationalist. The statements made in regard to it bring to mind a passage from the essay on Vauvenargues.<sup>25</sup> Morley is discussing aphorisms, and particularly such aphorisms as the following: Great thoughts come from the heart; Reason misleads us more often than Nature; Perhaps we owe to the passions the greatest advantages of the intellect. The comment which Morley adds is, "Such sayings are only true on condition that instinct and nature and passion have been already moulded under the influence of reason." It was when carried to its limit that

<sup>24</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, pp. 68-69.

<sup>25</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 2, p. 23.

this exaltation of feeling over reason "developed the speculative and social excesses of the great sentimental school." In another place,<sup>26</sup> writing of the first aphorism, that "great thoughts come from the heart," Morley adds the qualification: "Yes, but they must go round by the head."

Keeping in mind these dicta which Morley has given, we may easily understand his appreciation of certain great figures of his century. He considers the genius of Wordsworth the exceptional fact of the period; he is the greatest and purest exponent of what to Morley is the keynote of the revolutionary times—simplification. "While leading men to pierce below the artificial and the conventional to the natural man and the natural life, as Rousseau did, Wordsworth still cherished the symbols, the traditions, and the great institutions of social order. Simplification of life and feeling was to be accomplished without summoning up the dangerous spirit of destruction and revolt. Wordsworth lived with Nature, yet waged no angry railing war against society." Morley quite rightly finds the chief literary force opposed to Wordsworth to have been Byron; to one, communion with nature was the school of duty, to the other, nature was the "mighty consoler and vindicator of the rebel." A paradox is evident. Wordsworth, who clung fervently to the historic foundations of society as it stands, was wholly indifferent to history, while Byron had as strong a feeling for history as any poet had, and has expressed his feeling tellingly. But, Morley adds, "no doubt it was history on its romantic, rather than on its philosophic or its political side."<sup>27</sup>

Morley denies the existence of any system of philosophy in Wordsworth. No poet, he writes, can live permanently by systems; be the system what it may, ethical, theological, or philosophical, it is the "heavy lead of poetry."<sup>28</sup> Although thought is predominant over feeling in Wordsworth, we have no right to claim for that pervading reflection a constituted system. "When he tells us that 'one impulse from a vernal wood may teach you more of man, of moral evil and of good, than all the sages can,' such a proposition cannot seriously be taken as more than a half-playful sally for the benefit of

<sup>26</sup> *Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 346.

<sup>27</sup> *Studies*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>28</sup> *Idem*, p. 46.

some too bookish friend. No impulse from a vernal wood can teach us anything at all of moral evil and of good." And furthermore, the idea of the Ode, that the further we recede from childhood the less are we able to appreciate nature, is "contrary to notorious fact, experience, and truth."<sup>29</sup> Rather than in any philosophy, Wordsworth's special claim lies in his ability to glorify and to idealize the universe, "perhaps only too consciously," so that nature becomes an animate presence and not merely a stage. He sees nature not in any traditional, literary manner, but from direct observation. Still, he was not alive to the "blind and remorseless cruelties of life and the world"; he saw only the benign aspects of nature and was led to lament what man has made of man, as if, Morley adds, nature did not abound in horrors of her own. Wordsworth realized that the laws of the universe are eternal, but he failed to grasp their inexorability. "Wordsworth had not rooted in him the sense of Fate—of the inexorable sequence of things, of the terrible chain that so often binds an awful end to some slight and trivial beginning." His attitude is contrasted with that of Millet to whom the peasant in the field, in spite of his glorious surroundings, was still a peasant, and a hard-working one, too. Harsh facts of that type were blended into Wordsworth's picture, and lost their harshness.

By the force of his direct appeal to will and conduct Wordsworth is still further distinguished above his contemporaries; the reader, we are told, will not find any intoxication in his poetry, but rather those elements which lead to composure and to "self-government in a far loftier sense than the merely prudential." The three books of the *Prelude* which describe the poet's residence in France give an "abiding lesson to great men how to bear themselves in hours of public stress."<sup>30</sup>

Morley's disavowal of any moral element in nature is a revelation of the difference between him and the Romanticists.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, p. 149: "At the conclusion of the *Poems* came the famous Ode, falsely called Platonic, "Intimations of Immortality": in which, along with more than his usual sweetness of melody and rhythm, and along with the two passages of grand imagery but bad philosophy so often quoted"—etc.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Mill's *Essay on Poetry and its Varieties*: "The well is never so full that it overflows—he seems to be poetical because he wills to be so, not because he cannot help it; did he will to dismiss poetry, he need never again, it might almost seem, have a poetical thought."

In refusing to attribute the implied corrective to nature, he speaks out plainly against that sentimental conception which has met with the favor of many since the early years of the nineteenth century, and which has found its most successful professor in our own country in Emerson. Imagination without utility is acceptable to Morley, but he does not sanction the imagination which to him is akin to untruth. To a certain type of mind his matter-of-fact observations on the power of nature and his rejection of the thought that trees and flowers bring a moral message are sufficient to incapacitate him as a judge of nature poetry. But let us not be rash in forming a decision. Because Morley will not admit the "vernal wood" to the rank of teacher, we are not justified in concluding that he is insensible to the charms of poetry that describe the external world. His hostility is extended only to that type of poetry which would find in nature something which reason says is not there. There is nothing, however, in his essays which would lead the reader to suppose that Morley is dull to nature poetry.

Of a piece with his denial of a didactic influence in nature is his comment on Wordsworth's failure to realize the inexorable sequence of the universe. The criticism is, of course, a direct product of Morley's philosophy. A positivist sees in the multitudinous happenings of a lifetime not a beneficent ordering of events, but the inevitable effect from cause; and he is likely to have but little sympathy with a less rigorous conception. That the result of his thinking should be grimly suggestive of the mechanistic is evident. The observation may be permitted that part of the charm of Morley's work lies in the fact that he does not allow his sense of this inexorable sequence to turn to gloominess, but finds rather in such ordering the only source of a quite sanguine outlook for coming generations.

Morley's consideration of Byron is consonant with the view quoted earlier, that a critic should relate a poet to an existing age. The appearance of such a radical in a conservative country seems to him phenomenal. Still more singular is the fact that Byron was a member of the most conservative class in England—the aristocracy. And yet, it was a member of England's aristocracy who bore the most out-spoken testimony against the religious and social customs of his day.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. I, pp. 203 ff.

Morley frankly criticizes England because she is waning in her appreciation of Byron's efforts. It is only in England, he states, that the conservatives shun the facts of the Revolution by shutting their eyes to them, while the friends of progress imagine that they will reap all the benefits of the change if they restrain themselves from public discussion. Englishmen are too practical to find value in what was hardly more than an aspiration. They "like to be able to answer about the Revolution as those ancients answered about the symbol of another Revolution, when they said that they knew not so much as whether there were a Holy Ghost or not." According to Morley, the Revolution never seized strongly enough the imagination of the English people, and for that reason new generations of readers are unable to understand Byron, its spokesman. Byron's conception itself was inadequate and transitional, but the very expression of the conception showed that he was a great power. "There is no better proof of the enormous force of Byron's genius than that it was able to produce so fine an expression of elements so intrinsically unfavourable to poetry as doubt, denial, antagonism, and weariness. But this force was no guarantee for perpetuity of influence. Bare rebellion cannot endure, and no succession of generations can continue nourishing themselves on the poetry of complaint and the idealization of revolt." Nevertheless, we should not pass lightly over the aspirations of Byron, because there may be something of value "in the noble freedom and genuine modernism of his poetic spirit."

To Morley Byron is the most essentially political of English poets, or as the thought is expressed more exactly, he was inspired by a "poetical worldliness" which prompted him to an energetic interest in the transactions of life, and which often elevated his emotion into lofty moods. Such an inspiration, Morley finds, was lacking in Shelley; he did not possess a "keen and omnipresent feeling for the great course of human events. All nature stirred him, except the consummating crown of human growth"—in spite of his propaganda in Ireland, his active benevolence, and his many stanzas dealing with injustice. "Of mankind he was barely conscious, in his loftiest and divinest flights. His muse seeks the vague translucent spaces where the care of man melts away in vision of the eternal forces, of which man may be but the fortuitous mani-

festation of an hour." Byron, on the contrary, no matter how strong his emotion, is never moved entirely away from the struggles of mankind. "Even his misanthropy is only an inverted form of social solicitude." In a very forceful passage at the conclusion of the essay, Morley accredits Byron with a passionate feeling for mankind, a feeling that extended far into the past and into the future. No poet had a "more sublime sense of the infinite melancholy of history." Byron's death in Greece was the result of his desire to do something for mankind; "the historic feeling for the unseen benefactors of old time was matched by vehemence of sympathy with the struggles for liberation of his own day." Even Byron's humor is an indication to Morley of an interest in mankind, since "it is of the essence of the humoristic nature, that whether sunny or saturnine, it binds the thoughts of him who possesses it to the wide medley of expressly human things." It was because men realized that Byron was of like passions with themselves that he became a social force. I am inclined to accuse Morley of striving after the simile when he writes that Byron never for long moved on remote heights away from mankind but "returned again like the fabled dove from the desolate void of waters to the ark of mortal stress and human passion."

Of much interest, although the opinion has for long been generally accepted, is Morley's analysis of Byron's attitude toward nature. I have already referred to the statement that Byron was the chief opposing force in literature to Wordsworth; the idea is more fully developed in the essay under discussion.

To Byron, according to the thought of the essay, nature was but the background for the tragedy of man. This view he shared in common with the Revolutionists. Because the poet did see nature as the background, he was unable to present the minutiae. Byron rarely directed his attention to details; he often takes the reader through an enormous number of natural objects without affixing any but the conventional terms to them. I must quote a passage expressing this thought: "Our generation is more likely to think too much than too little of this; for its favourite poet, however narrow in subject and feeble in moral treatment, is without any peer in the exquisitely original, varied, and imaginative art of his landscape touches. This treatment of nature (referring to Byron's) was in exact

harmony with the method of revolutionary thought, which, from the time of Rousseau downwards, had appealed in its profound weariness of an existing social state to the solitude and seeming freedom of mountain and forest and ocean, as though the only cure for the woes of civilization lay in annihilating it. This was an appeal less to nature than from man, just as we have said that Byron's was, and hence it was distinct from the single-eyed appreciation of nature for her own sake, for her beauty and terror and unnumbered moods, which has made of her the mistress and the consoler of many men in these times. In the days of old faith while the catholic gods sat yet firm upon their thrones, the loveliness of the universe shone to blind eyes." Even during the Revolution, when men had overthrown the old gods but were still wanting in a settled faith, nature could not be viewed as later writers were in the habit of considering her. "So they fled in spirit or in flesh into unfamiliar scenes, and vanished from society, because society was not sufficiently social."<sup>32</sup>

Morley believes that the Revolutionists developed a rationalistic virtue from this philosophic rather than artistic view of nature. Although a sentimentalism arose as feeble in art as the metaphysical in philosophy, nevertheless this nature worship was an approach to positivity.<sup>33</sup> The idea of nature as an abstraction gave "shape and proportion to that great idea of ensemble throughout the universe" which is the beginning of knowledge. Byron's continued meditation on the life and movement that surrounds mankind "implied and promoted the widest extension of consciousness of the wholeness and community of natural processes." But the very conception was attended by an evil consequence. The principle of moral duty and social obligation was entirely overshadowed by the vastness of the universe. A specific instance is found in the disappearance of the domestic sentiment. Even this loss Morley excuses as the result of a justified revolt against the "mean and poor form of domesticity" which George the Third, living as a farmer, popularized. Byron cleared the air of that form of sentimentalism. "His fire, his lofty spaciousness of outlook, his spirited interest in great national causes, his romance, and the passion alike of his animosity and his sym-

<sup>32</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 220.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, p. 221.



pathy, acted for a while like an electric current, and every one within his influence became ashamed to barter the larger heritage of manhood, with its many realms and illimitable interests, for the sordid ease of the hearth and the good word of the unworthy. He fills men with thoughts that shake down the unlovely temple of comfort."

The author of this startling passage is not without a sense of the evils of the revolutionary movement. He characterizes it as "crude, unscientific, virtually abortive." It was presided over by a false idea of nature, that which held nature to be a "benign and purifying power" instead of a force to be tamed. It erred also in tracing the evils of mankind to the social union, instead of finding in that union the source of strength. The revolutionists failed to understand that Truth and not Freedom should have been the watchword.

Such a state Byron was called to interpret, and, although he represented more of the ashes than the flame of the Revolution, he was in close sympathy with the movement, and so became popular. "The list of his poems is the catalogue of the elements of the revolutionary spirit." When the Byronic hero failed to find the life he was seeking, he gave violent expression to his complaint. He "went to clasp repose in a frenzy. All crimson and aflame with passion he groaned for evening stillness." As if, Morley adds, such freedom could ever exist without a well-ordered mind and an acceptance, partial at least, of the surroundings!

It was because Byron had no justification in thought that his struggles were doomed to disappointment; he himself often found that his fits of passion had left him nothing. Perhaps, Morley continues, the excessive material activity of Byron was an effort to hide this spiritual vacuity; but even the activity itself was often robbed of its power by a secret distrust of his aims, methods, and results. Furthermore, although Byron did have a sense of the ensemble of nature, he had no conception of her systematic workings and of human relations with her. He was lacking in that great virtue of the man he admired: the "luminous and coherent positivity" of Goethe. Had Byron only known, Morley writes, that all the beliefs which men have held either in regard to themselves or to their gods have had a source in the permanently useful instincts of mankind and are capable of historical explanation and justifi-

cation, his revolt would have taken on new cogency. His ethical poverty was undoubtedly the result of the same lack of positive intellectual ideals. Curiously enough, Morley finds in Byron's preference for the drama a sign of an approach on his part to the positive spirit. The definition of dramatic art which Morley gives will explain this reference. "Dramatic art, in its purest modern conception, is genuinely positive; that is, it is the presentation of action, character, and motive in a self-sufficing and self-evolving order. There are no final causes, and the first moving elements are taken for granted to begin with. The dramatist creates, but it is the climax of his work to stand absolutely apart and unseen, while the play unfolds itself to the spectator." Byron was attracted to the drama partly by the love of the revolutionist for action, but partly also by his "rudimentary and unsuspected affinity with the more constructive and scientific side of the modern spirit." That Byron was not wont to indulge in the declamation common to the Revolutionists is proof of a fundamental rationalism in his thinking: "an angel of reasonableness seems to watch over him." Why should Morley have written so eulogistically of Byron? The distance between the two men is seemingly so great that it precludes on Morley's part an approach in which there is evidence not only of sympathy but of admiration. The extent of that distance may be estimated if we but think of the dissimilarity between them in environment, action, and achievement. Obviously the reason for Morley's attraction cannot be found in any of these matters.

The point of contact is in the ideals of the movements which Morley and Byron represented. The rationalistic movement transferred into philosophic terms one of the main aspirations of the Romanticists—the exaltation of the individual. Consequently, to each group the study of human relations was of greater importance than the investigation of the purely material world. The law of man was of more interest than the law of physical science. That this statement is true of the Romanticists may be accepted without my advancing the details of proof. The position of the rationalists is just as clear. Bentham's interest in man was the stimulus to his codification of the laws; Comte considered sociology as the consummation of the sciences; Mill's preference was for the problems of government, of individual liberty, of the common good. Mor-

ley has also expressed himself clearly. Thus, in discussing the relative claims of science and literature, he writes: "But, if there is to be exclusion, I, for one, am not prepared to accept the rather enormous pretensions that are nowadays sometimes made for science as the be-all and end-all of education."<sup>34</sup> In another place<sup>35</sup> he considers that one of the important results of science is the fostering of cosmopolitanism: "in multifarious congresses in every capital of the world nationality is effaced." He writes of science in the same passage as one of the strongest unifying agents of the time.

Byron also represents for Morley much the same spirit of revolt which the French thinkers of the eighteenth century exemplified. Admittedly Byron was opposed to the religious and social conventions of his day, just as the Encyclopaedists were opposed to the traditions of their age. More was needed, however, before Byron could be apotheosized. He must possess in some way the positive spirit; he must understand the meaning of history; he must have an interest in mankind, an interest that would explain his satires, his flights of fancy, and his death. I think that Morley has read into the poetry of Byron many of those intellectual virtues which the rationalist seeks. The evidence for Morley's opinion is at best tenuous.

---

So far we have been concerned with the thought which Morley finds in the Romanticists. I have attempted to show that his discussion of the ideals of the Romanticists is influenced to a remarkable degree by his philosophy; wherever possible he has fitted their aspirations into the rationalistic program. I have taken up this side of his criticism first because beyond a doubt Morley is primarily interested in poetry in its exemplification of what I have called rationalistic virtues. To many readers this type of criticism nullifies the beauties of poetry; and I should agree with this opinion were there nothing more subtle in Morley's criticism. All charms, however, do not fly at the cold touch of philosophy.

Our study of Morley will be simplified if we bear in mind one general thought. Matters of taste must always occupy a

<sup>34</sup> *Studies*, p. 200.

<sup>35</sup> *Notes on Politics and History*, pp. 145, 147

secondary place in his writings. Furthermore, what evidence of taste there is will at times inevitably reflect the critic's rationalism. Morley, it will be noticed, does not divulge in that type of criticism in which the emotions play a large part, as in Swinburne's criticism of Byron, for example. The reader feels that Morley has his emotions in check, that he realizes by ratiocination that the affections must be admitted as important elements in life. But even with this limitation there is sufficient proof that the second thought of my thesis, namely, that Morley evinces the subtleties of intuitive taste, is warranted.

That the emphasis which he places on the necessity for spirituality and feeling is at times the result of a logical analysis should not invalidate his discussion of these ethereal qualities. His understanding of their value is frequently expressed: "The full, contented and ever festal life is found in the equal ordering of reason and affections with one another, in active freedom of curiosity and search taking significance, motive, force from a warm inner pulse of human love and sympathy."<sup>36</sup> Spirituality is defined as follows: "It consists in the power of transfiguring action, character, and thought, in the serene radiance of the purest imaginative intelligence, and the gift of expressing these transformed products in the finest articulate vibrations of emotional speech."<sup>37</sup> To Morley, Shelley is the best exponent among English poets of this spirituality. In Dante, Morley finds that the inspiring force was spiritual, in Goethe intellectual, in Shakespeare and in Milton political and social, although in the last two the spiritual element is not lacking; to ascribe a want of spirituality "would be at once to thrust them on to a lower plane; for the spiritual is of the very essence of poetry." But with Englishmen, Morley believes, this higher feeling is mixed with abundant impressions of the outer world, so that both Shakespeare and Milton are concerned with man, the political being.

The value of the high states of feeling to which the poet may attune the soul is best appreciated in Wordsworth.<sup>38</sup> Morley finds, as others have found, that Wordsworth is often heavy and self-conscious with the burden of his message, but

<sup>36</sup> Rousseau, vol. I, p. 152.

<sup>37</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 2, 213.

<sup>38</sup> *Studies*, pp. 40-42.

when, as in Michael, the sermon is omitted, he is truly admirable. There is danger, he continues, that Wordsworth will be unduly solemn, when not solemnity but either sternness or sadness would be the fitter mood. The Lake Poet does not know how to be stern, as Dante or Milton was stern, nor does he have the plangency of Rousseau, Keats, Shelley, or Coleridge. But often in the midst of his solemnity Wordsworth introduces passages, as in the second book of the *Excursion* where he describes the almsman, in which his special gift is displayed at its best. Morley compares the lines to the landscape in which they were composed: the reader can no more appreciate the beauty of the one by a single or second perusal, than he can the other by a scamper through the vale on the box of a coach. In them is the true strength which "out of the trivial raises expression for the pathetic and the sublime." He believes, however, that Wordsworth, even apart from proximity and solemnity, is frequently surpassed by poets much below him in weight and greatness; he questions whether even in his field of the simple and pastoral Wordsworth has touched a note so sweet and spontaneous as Burns' *Daisy* or the *Mouse*.<sup>39</sup> The *Prelude* does not have the musical, harmonious, sympathetic quality which seizes the reader even in the prose of such a book as Rousseau's *Confessions*. Still Morley finds the *Prelude* unique in its impressive power, containing many "noble passages of high reflection set to sonorous verse."<sup>40</sup> That Morley has a keen sense of the finer shades of poetic feeling is well illustrated in another passage in which he contrasts the melancholy of George Eliot with that of other poets. I shall content myself with referring the reader to the passage.<sup>41</sup>

Very illuminating is the dictum on aesthetics which Morley gives in the essay on Byron,<sup>42</sup> and of particular interest from the point of view of rationalistic influence. It is agreed, he writes, that positivity is the first condition for the attainment of truth in the field of science, and in general its value is admitted in the material order. In the field of aesthetics, however, the admission is only of recent date. In all artistic

<sup>39</sup> *Studies*, p. 42.

<sup>40</sup> *Idem*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>41</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, pp. 116-117.

<sup>42</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 236-237.

forms the critic may expect to find a profound unity of subjective impression, that is, the "impression of a self-sustaining order and a self-sufficing harmony among all those faculties and parts and energies of universal life which come within the idealising range of art. In other words, the characteristically modern inspiration is the inspiration of law. The regulated play of forces shows itself as fit to stir those profound emotional impulses which wake the artistic soul, as ever did the gracious or terrible gods of antique or middle times." Furthermore, he considers that it is incorrect to suppose that this conception of order is inhibitory in the realm of the emotions any more than it is in the intellectual. Why, he asks, if modern science has been stimulated through positive conclusions, should not the same stimulus be felt in aesthetics through the introduction of positivity?

The nearest approximation to a definition of beauty which Morley gives is found in the essay on the Ring and the Book. Is it any more, he asks, "than such an arrangement and disposition of the parts of the work as, first kindling a great variety of dispersed emotions and thoughts in the mind of the spectator, finally concentrates them in a single mood of joyous, sad, meditative or interested delight?" It is readily granted, he continues, that the sculptor, painter, and musician each has his particular means of producing this effect; in poetry, because people fail to realize the varied means of reaching this goal, the critic is too likely to insist upon "some particular quiddity, which, entering into composition constitutes it genuinely poetic, beautiful, or artistic." For this reason the criticism of poetry is usually limited. A man remembers that he has been pleased by a poem in a certain style, and concludes that that style is the only source of beauty.<sup>43</sup> I must quote Morley's opposing view, not only for the immediate thought in mind, but because it shows him as a selective critic: "Why not rather perceive that, to take contemporaries, the beauty of *Thyrsis* is mainly produced by a fine suffusion of delicately-toned emotion; that of *Atalanta* by splendid and barely rivalled music of verse; of *In Memoriam* by its ordered and harmonious presentation of a sacred mood; of the *Spanish Gypsy*, in the parts where it reaches beauty, by a sublime ethical passion; of the *Earthly Paradise*, by sweet and simple re-

<sup>43</sup> *Studies*, pp. 265-266.

production of the spirit of the younger-hearted times?" As fully satisfying the requirements of an artistic triumph Morley cites the Ring and the Book; it abounds in "many-coloured scenes and diverse characters, in vivid image and portraiture, wide reflection and multiform emotion," and combines in unity of thought all these impressions into one "supreme and elevated conviction."<sup>44</sup>

It would be an easy matter to extend the list of such references, to indicate what Morley thought of this poem or of that. There would be but little profit however in the enumeration; additional examples would merely duplicate those already given. I may be permitted a few concluding remarks.

The dangers inherent in the criticism which is founded on rationalism are many. The obvious pitfall is this, that the critic will be so intent in his pursuit of those who have shown evidence of the positivistic spirit or who have contributed, in his opinion, to the progress of mankind, that he will overlook consciously the less intellectual features of the poetry considered. "Stray graces" are readily sacrificed in the pageantry of history; a scrutiny of the human heart is included only with difficulty in a survey of gigantic forces. Or again, if the critic admits the validity of these kindlier elements, he may do so with a degree of condescension which will alienate those to whom the emotional appeal of poetry is of first importance and so not to be treated concessively. Furthermore, the rationalistic critic may read poetry through colored lenses; he may be too ready to reconcile the thoughts of a poet with the formalism of rationalistic philosophy.

Fortunately, there is divergence in criticism even among rationalists; there is no uniform criticism of poetry from the school; we cannot point to any one writer as inclusive of the others. One will reject the entire corpus of poetry; another will overstress the value of feeling; a third—I am thinking of Morley—will establish the more proper unity of thought and emotion.

We should be judging against the evidence gathered together in the preceding pages if we were to conclude that Morley has avoided all the dangers previously mentioned. The rationalistic bias is too evident. The reader feels at times that Morley has discovered, positivistically, that the affections are es-

<sup>44</sup> *Idem.* p. 267.

sential; as though, to quote Stevenson, "those delicate tissues where the soul resides and does her earthly business" were not the prime constituents. They seem frequently to be admitted only by sanction of the intellect. And yet, there is sufficient evidence on the other hand to show that Morley has judged expressions of feeling as they should be judged—intuitively.

The rationalistic bias has been emphasized, perhaps unduly, by critics. Sufficient stress, however, has not been placed on the synthesis which Morley has attempted. The components of thought and feeling were already present in rationalistic philosophy, but, unfortunately for purposes of literary criticism, the latter was sinking into a quite negligible position. It is a mark of superior intellect in Morley that he has recognized the compelling power of the affections in conjunction with the formal intellectuality of his philosophy. By means of that recognition he has produced criticism which has the singular merit of not being derivative; we are not reminded at this thought or that expression of other writers. Of itself such a virtue is by no means trivial. It means in sum that the critic has been enabled through his extended reading and his selective philosophy to formulate an original critical formula, and, by adhering in broad outline to that formula, to produce original criticism.



## CHAPTER II

### MORLEY'S CRITICISM OF PROSE

In the following pages I am going to discuss Morley's criticism of certain prose writers. I shall pay particular attention to his essays on Carlyle and on Macaulay, and shall consider, but only very briefly, his criticisms of George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, and Emerson.

I shall bring forward proof to show that Morley has judged the authors just mentioned according to his philosophy; and in so doing I shall support the main point of the first chapter, namely, that Morley's criticism is moulded by his philosophy. So far then I shall be treating his criticism of poetry and of prose similarly.

In regard to the second point emphasized in the previous chapter—that Morley has judged intuitively at times—a certain qualification is necessary. The reason for this qualification is to be found in the character of the subjects treated; for there are essential differences between criticism of prose and criticism of poetry.

Poetry appeals particularly to our intuitions; we may pronounce a poem good or bad without resorting to an analysis of the thought which it contains. Thus, the Ode on Immortality has an immediate charm for the lover of poetry; to a philosopher, when he is in a mood to criticize the thought, the poem may be of but little value. I have cited Mill's favorable criticism of the style of the Ode and his rejection of its philosophy.

The majority of prose writers, on the other hand, offer at once a challenge to the intellect. Thought is of first, form of secondary importance. To pass satisfactory judgment on their work we must analyze and weigh opinions. This statement is true, I say, of the majority of writers; that there are many to whom we look for form rather than for thought is undeniable. I am probably safe in stating that Burton in his *Anatomy* does not at all interest the reader by fully documented expositions of the ills of mankind; that the same reader is not

much concerned with Sir Thomas Browne's brand of Protestantism as he explains it in the *Religio Medici*; and that the reason for the love we bear Jeremy Taylor is not to be sought in his opinions as a minister. The judgments of these writers do not hold our interest so much as does the manner in which they are expressed.

Morley has refrained in general from a criticism of this second type of prose writer. We shall find the reason for this omission in his critical formula; the thought of an author is of more value than the form of expression. Furthermore, he has selected for the most part writers who were either directly opposed to his own position, or who showed decided sympathy with rationalism.

This selection must influence a critic's approach to Morley. There cannot be much discussion of intuitive taste when those writers who might have been judged by it have been avoided. I must place emphasis accordingly on the relation of Morley's criticism to his philosophy. There is not lacking, however, a criticism of prose style, and to this I shall turn afterward in order to effect a balance. I shall then finally consider the style of Morley, himself.

A professional man of letters, to whom his calling is at once his life's business and his pleasure, finds the expressing of his opinions on the value of literature a congenial task. But it is not often that a professional man of letters enters the more active field of politics and still retains for his earlier vocation complete sympathy and a sense of its indispensable worth. Morley is a notable example. Whether we judge his work from his earlier writings or from those written after he had taken his seat in Parliament, we shall find the same estimate of the value of literature, the same standard applied to it. His opinions therefore are doubly valuable: they have not only the authority of his wide reading and clear understanding, but are strengthened by having stood the test of his experience in public life.

The student of Morley's essays is not perplexed when he learns that the author, after having established a reputation as a critic during the course of some fifteen years, turned to a field so different from that of *belles lettres*, because the difference clearly lies rather in the relative amount of action than

in the trend of thought. The change did not imply a breach in the continuity of Morley's purposes. He had already found in literature the guidance and consolation suited to a statesman. Had the poet Gray given up his Cambridge seclusion for a place in Parliament, we might reasonably question the wisdom of his course; but when J. S. Mill or Morley becomes a public servant, the new life is, as it were, a pragmatic test of rationalistic or utilitarian doctrines. A more convincing statement in regard to Morley's public life is not required of me; the proof will be part of the task of Morley's fortunate biographer, whoever he may be. Let it suffice for present purposes if I can set forth Morley's opinions on the function of literature, and so show that literature to him is a practical art.

Literature ranks high for Morley as one of the humanizing arts, although not as the greatest of these. What is it, he asks, that earns for literature its important place? The answer is that literature is the "master organon for giving men the two precious qualities of interest and balance of judgment." Unfortunately, literature has been associated too often, he adds, with virtuosity and affectations, as a "thing of madrigals."<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Newman's opinion is quoted with approval,<sup>2</sup> that the object of literature is "to open the mind, to correct it, to refine it." It cherishes within us the ideal; and while not a substitute for life and action, it reconciles us to the discipline of life, and gives us an understanding of what is best in others and in ourselves.<sup>3</sup> The end of a literary education, we learn,<sup>4</sup> is "to make a man and not a cyclopaedia, to make a citizen and not an album of elegant extracts"; literature is a powerful instrument for forming character and reinforcing reason with knowledge. History and literature are "only embodiments, illustrations, experiments, for ideas about religion, conduct, society, history, government, and all the other great heads and departments of a complete social doctrine."<sup>5</sup>

What then is his definition of literature? For the most part, literature is a "hollow and pretentious phantasmagoria of

<sup>1</sup> Voltaire, p. 118.

<sup>2</sup> Studies, pp. 211-212.

<sup>3</sup> *Idem*, pp. 201-202.

<sup>4</sup> *Idem*, pp. 226-227.

<sup>5</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 1, p. 141.

unimic figures posing in breeches and perukes";<sup>6</sup> nearly all literature is distinctly secondary, serving to pass the time of the leisured class, without influencing men or women.<sup>7</sup> The man of letters is usually unable to conceive of any higher service than the composition of books.<sup>8</sup> With such generalities we must consider on the positive side this more formal definition: literature consists of "all books—and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form." All is literature that teaches us to know man and human nature.<sup>9</sup> A study of literature is a study of the most important side of history;<sup>10</sup> the study does not end with a knowledge of forms, with finding the key to rhythm, although, Morley adds, he does not condemn these. But of more importance are those studies which bring to the soul of man soberness, righteousness, and wisdom.<sup>11</sup>

This definition of literature may be made more detailed by means of a few references in which Morley interprets the nature of the task which the man of letters must perform. He must seriously advance social interests and must add something to human stature;<sup>12</sup> unless he have a "presentiment of the eve; a feeling of the difficulties that will engage and distract mankind on the morrow," his work will be transitory.<sup>13</sup> The best kind of bookman is he who "explores through books the voyages of the human reason, the shifting impulses of the heart, the chequered fortunes of great human conceptions." He must not linger over abstract ideas or literary effects, but must reveal the "moral and intellectual configuration" of his subjects.<sup>14</sup> In order to reach excellence in literature, one must have "self-possession; a double current of impulse and deliberation; a free stream of ideas spontaneously obeying a sense of order, harmony, and form."<sup>15</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 304.

<sup>7</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 2, p. 148.

<sup>8</sup> Voltaire, p. 17.

<sup>9</sup> Studies, p. 218.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem*, p. 220.

<sup>11</sup> *Idem*, p. 226.

<sup>12</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 2, p. 148.

<sup>13</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 1, p. 290.

<sup>14</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 3, p. 166.

<sup>15</sup> Diderot, vol. 1, p. 42.

For Morley the "force of speculative literature depends on practical opportuneness," and he has taken care to exemplify this in his own work. The practical needs of the day are paramount. From those needs arises a desire for an inspiring social faith, for a faith that is born of meditation rather than of reverie. The animating faith, he writes, which consoles and sustains hosts of men and women is a conviction of "upward and onward progress in the destinies of mankind"; the liturgy of the new faith is culture, and its deity is a "certain high composure of the human heart."<sup>16</sup>

I could extend the list of references but I refrain from doing so. The reader can find in any of Morley's volumes the same principles insisted on with the same confidence; Morley has gathered them together, if in one volume more than in another, in *On Compromise*. The individual's position relative to society, the obligations of society to the individual, the futility of violence and the necessity for tolerance—these are some of the principles which he continually emphasizes and by means of which he would fashion a true citizen and not an "album of elegant extracts." The words of one of his critics would sound pleasant to Morley: "A young man might do far worse than to form himself, intellectually, upon the writings of an author so serious in tone and purpose, so clear in thought and expression . . ."<sup>17</sup>

In no biographical study has Morley expressed his principles so clearly as in the essay on Carlyle. Valuable as it is as a commentary on Carlyle, it is of still more value as a statement of Morley's opposition to many of the tenets which Carlyle proclaimed.

Morley in a vigorous passage expresses his belief that the most important service which Carlyle rendered was the neutralization of the Byronic influence. He mentions points of resemblance between Carlyle and Byron: each complained against the time and its spirit, each possessed something of the same despair and a sense of man's puniness in the immensity of the universe. Carlyle even surpassed Byron in holding vehemently to these beliefs. "Carlylism is the male of Byronism. It is Byronism with thew and sinew, bass pipe and shaggy

<sup>16</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 211.

<sup>17</sup> *Dial*, vol. 7, p. 40 (1886).

bosom.”<sup>18</sup> Against the Romantic mood, Morley continues, the ordinary moralist was without effect; only a revolutionist can overthrow a revolutionist. The sole deliverance from the malign influence was to be found in Carlyle’s gospel of work, of duty done, and of service bravely performed. Morley questions whether Carlyle’s important work did not end with this neutralization of Byron’s influence.

He gives Carlyle full credit for having stimulated the moral energy of his generation. He praises Carlyle’s “natural supernaturalism”—a recognition of the immensity which surrounds us, and of the value of aspiring to penetrate its mysteries. This philosophy, Morley believes, was the result of Carlyle’s revolt from the unelevated positivity of the eighteenth century, and of his study of the transcendentalism of his own day. Nevertheless, the Eternities and the Immensities of which Carlyle has written so vehemently are not unrelated to life; and if we look closely we may see that they have veiled Carlyle’s adherence to a practical formula.

Wherein, then, is to be found the diverging point of view which has led Morley to write an essay which in spite of much eulogy is fundamentally hostile? Certainly the reason cannot be found in any failure on Carlyle’s part to recognize contemporary evils and in a cogent manner to preach against them. Neither may we say that Carlyle has not posited a definite goal, nor that he has failed to expound the means of achieving it. The main reason is Morley’s dislike of Carlyle’s violence and dogmatism in moral judgment. Morley misses the catholic sympathy which enables a man to see good on both sides and to understand the motives of those who are different from himself and have different moral standards. Therein lies a cardinal element of Morley’s teaching; it is necessary to illustrate his attitude by direct references to his writings.

The inability of English writers to think of conduct except as right or wrong, and of teaching except as true or false has been, in Morley’s opinion, at the root of much injustice and darkness. “We have simply got for our pains a most unlovely leanness of judgment, and ever since the days when this temper set in until now, when a wholesome rebellion is afoot, it has steadily and powerfully tended to straiten character,

<sup>18</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 162.

to make action mechanical, and to impoverish art. As if there were nothing admirable in man save unbroken obedience to the letter of the moral law, and that letter read in our own casual and local interpretation; and as if we had no faculties of sympathy, no sense for the beauty of character, no feeling for broad force and full-pulsing vitality."<sup>19</sup> In *Voltaire* a similar thought is expressed. Criticism is concerned not so much with praise or blame as with marking out the material from which a man has his life to make; the critic is not obliged to settle whether a man was absolutely rich or absolutely poor; his business is to count up his subject's talents and to indicate the usury of his own which has been added to them.<sup>20</sup> I call the reader's attention also to a passage in *Rousseau*: it is the "business of criticism to separate what is accidental in form, transitory in manner, and merely local in suggestion, from the general ideas which live under a casual and particular literary robe."<sup>21</sup> We are able consequently to understand Morley's disapproval of Macaulay, when he states that to Macaulay "criticism was only a tribunal before which men were brought to be decisively tried by one or two inflexible tests, and then sent to join the sheep on the one hand, or the goats on the other."<sup>22</sup>

In brief, Morley speaks for humanity, for tolerance, for breadth of vision, against a sectarian, a provincial, a journalistic, an oratorical, or any other limitation of moral judgment which offends enlightened reason. And it is because Carlyle is essentially intolerant that Morley is irked by his emphasis. When Carlyle exclaims, "Caitiff, we hate thee," Morley adds, "But this is slightly vague. It is not scientific. There are caitiffs and caitiffs. There is a more and a less of scoundrelism—and we must have systematic jurisprudence, with its classification of caitiffs and its graduated blasting."<sup>23</sup>

Observe, however, that in expressing his dislike of Carlyle's dogmatism, Morley does not forget his own latitudinarianism. When we consider Carlyle's opposition to the writers whom Morley held most dear—J. S. Mill, Bentham, and Comte—then

<sup>19</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 183.

<sup>20</sup> *Voltaire*, p. 98.

<sup>21</sup> *Rousseau*, vol. 2, p. 19.

<sup>22</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>23</sup> *Idem*, p. 150.

the extent to which Morley has applied his principle of criticism is apparent. Without having renounced a single proposition of his rationalism, and without any loss of forcefulness, he has expressed as full an appreciation of Carlyle's services as we could rightly demand. Carlyle, in his opinion, despite the survival of much narrowness of judgment, was much in advance of his contemporaries. The reason for this greater freedom of appraisal Morley finds in his "poetised utilitarianism, or illumined positivity," by means of which Carlyle was able to see more in his characters than was allowed according to the common standard. Thus, for example, Carlyle found more in Burns than drunkenness, unchastity, and thriftlessness; and by his freer judgment did much to offset the limitations of the standard which Puritanism introduced into criticism. Morley finds the point worthy of remark, that in spite of the many emphatic statements which Carlyle has made about a large number of men of different opinions and temperaments, there is scarcely one from which we may dissent as being absurd or futile.

Let us depart for a while from the essay under discussion in order that we may study more fully the matter of tolerance in Morley's writings. One of his favorite thoughts, impressed on him originally by Burke, is that contained in the statement, "You cannot justly draw a capital indictment against a class."<sup>24</sup> Of course, Morley does not recommend that type of so-called broad-mindedness which is so broad that it never comes to a conclusion, and to which any definite stand is obnoxious. The sense of the statement is given in a passage from the essay on Joseph deMaistre. Considering the diversity of effort that is necessary for the advancement of mankind, Morley writes, men are not sufficiently anxious to gather up the fragments of truth, and as a result the writings of antagonists are frequently left unexamined.<sup>25</sup> In the study on W. R. Greg, a writer absolutely opposed to Morley, this omission is attributed to a failure to realize that character is more than opinion. Morley considers literature neutral ground: on it "we may forget the loud cries and sounding strokes, the watchwords and the tactics of the tented field, and fraternize with the adversary of the eve and the morrow in friendly

<sup>24</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2. p. 140.

<sup>25</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 2, pp. 258-259.



curiosity and liberal recognition."<sup>26</sup> The same thought is expressed in the essay on Robespierre: our opinions are much less important than the spirit and temper with which we hold them, and even good opinions are not worth much if we do not hold them intelligently and broadly.<sup>27</sup>

The virtue of such an attitude is clearly recognizable. For illustration we turn naturally to the writings of J. S. Mill. He has shown that a firm opposition need not be accompanied by a narrow dogmatism or by violent language; by reason alone of his abstention from abusive phrases he deserves the appellation which Gladstone gave him—"the saint of rationalism." But Mill is one of the few writers who could dispense with invective; the battles of the Victorians could not generally be waged without the excesses and the violently expressed prejudices which every strife engenders.

In Morley's essays the virtue is not so clearly in evidence as in those of his master, Mill. Breadth of judgment is of course not wanting; the range of his subjects and his ability to sympathize with leaders so diverse as the men of whom he has written furnish sufficient proof that Morley is not limited in mental scope. But we wish that he were not so obviously coercive; that he had not so often used the common phraseology of invective. It must be borne in mind, however, that severe phrases do not indicate blindness to the good qualities of those criticized. Because Morley writes that Great Britain is overrun and corroded to the heart "with cant and a foul mechanical hypocrisy," we are not to assume that he is without a sense of all that is valuable in contemporary life. On the contrary, he writes approvingly of his age as a time when there were the first signs of reason's coming into her own, when positive scientific thinking replaced earlier haphazard generalizing, and the true historical method was developed.<sup>28</sup>

His most conspicuous failure in tolerance is found in his attitude toward Christianity, in regard to which Mill was exceedingly circumspect and restrained. Morley can sympathize with any attitude toward a religious system except belief in it. Of that he denies any share. Those who agree with

<sup>26</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, p. 213.

<sup>27</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 78.

<sup>28</sup> See, among other possible references, *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 211, 220, 241.

him, he states, are not sceptics: "they positively, absolutely and without reserve, reject as false the whole system of objective propositions which make up the popular belief of the day, in one and all of its theological expressions."<sup>29</sup> There is no indication of the slightest deviation on his part from this avowal. In order to show clearly his attitude, I am obliged to refer at some length to his criticism of religion.

Perhaps too well known is his use of small initial letters in the words God, Catholic, Christ, Bible, Holy Ghost, Wesleyanism (compared with the capital of Voltairism!), particularly in evidence in *Rousseau*. Fortunately he gave over the practice; aside from the questions of reverence and of courtesy, it is awkward stylistically. Frequently he is facetious, as when he writes of "this strange absentee government"—God in remote parts,<sup>30</sup> whom he styles elsewhere<sup>31</sup> as a "grim chief justice of the universe, which criminal lawyers and others are trying to deck with the right official robes and to seat on the bench in our day"; the belief in a beneficent Supreme Being is accepted by the prosperous; it is the superlative mark of optimism.<sup>32</sup> Morley wonders why we must always call an unknown God by the one name, as though there were so few tasks on earth to be done that one must strain to fix the regimen of heaven.<sup>33</sup> He takes occasion to interject a bitter word in *Rousseau*, whose biographer, he writes, has no such stories to tell as those of Calas and LaBarre in the life of Voltaire, but only tales of a woman wrongfully accused of theft, and of a friend left senseless on the pavement of a strange town. Such a man (Rousseau) was moved to "speak a zealous word in vindication of the divine government of our world."<sup>34</sup> Quite puerile and unwarranted is the jest in regard to the trip of Hume and Rousseau from Calais to Dover: "Hume, as the orthodox may be glad to know, being extremely ill."<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> On Compromise. p. 160.

<sup>30</sup> Voltaire, p. 96.

<sup>31</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 267.

<sup>32</sup> Voltaire, pp. 277-278.

<sup>33</sup> *Idem*, p. 292.

<sup>34</sup> Rousseau, vol. 1, p. 318.

<sup>35</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 284. And yet, in thinking of Condorcet's antipathy to Christianity, Morley writes: "Well, this temper is not the richest nor the highest." (*Miscellanies*, vol. 2, pp. 176-177.)

Particularly violent are his criticisms of the clergy and of church organization as a whole. The pulpit is called "that colossal type of histrionic failure";<sup>36</sup> the language used in the pulpit does not differ from that of the atheist Holbach, except that the rebuke of the latter (against the pride of man) was sincere and necessary to prepare men's minds for the conception of the universe as a whole. The theologians, however, use the rebuke as a hollow shift in order to insinuate the miracle of Grace.<sup>37</sup> But Morley can be harsher than this even; thus, he writes, the Anglican clergy were the rivals in bigotry of George the Third;<sup>38</sup> the bishops and ecclesiasts are the "organized hierarchy of ignorance, insolence, and oppression in all times and places where they raise their masked heads."<sup>39</sup> He classes the "hack moralist of the pulpit" with that of the press, men to whom words are cheap and easily thrown forth.<sup>40</sup> The church system "has raised monstrous floods of sour cant round about us, and hardened the hearts and parched the sympathies of men by blasts from theological deserts."<sup>41</sup> Incessant celestial contemplation enervates the reason.<sup>42</sup> The desire for social righteousness is lacking only in those nations in which the spiritual power is limited to castes and state churches which "bury justice under the sterile accumulations of a fixed superstition."<sup>43</sup> The fallacy of associating durable morality with a transitory faith was evident, he holds, in the eighteenth century in France. Chaos of morals must always result when sound ethics are built on the shifting sands and rotting foundations of theology.<sup>44</sup> On the material side, also, disaster is apparent to Morley. The atrocities of the Terror are to him but an invisible speck compared with the atrocities of Christian churchmen, although he admits that these evils have been committed by those who have justified their actions by "stray texts caught up from the

<sup>36</sup> Diderot, vol. 1, p. 327.

<sup>37</sup> Diderot, vol. 2, p. 177.

<sup>38</sup> Burke, p. 8.

<sup>39</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 55.

<sup>40</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 184.

<sup>41</sup> *Idem*, p. 185.

<sup>42</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 36.

<sup>43</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 2, p. 180.

<sup>44</sup> Diderot, vol. 1, p. 74.

gospels."<sup>45</sup> Saint Bartholomew he names the "patron saint of Christian enormities."<sup>46</sup>

Morley at times rivals Carlyle in vehement denunciation of eighteenth century Catholicism. The object of Voltaire's assault, we are told, was "that amalgam of metaphysical subtleties, degrading legends, false miracles, and narrow depraving conceptions of divine government which made the starting-point and vantage-ground of those ecclesiastical oppressors, whom he habitually and justly designated the enemies of the human race."<sup>47</sup> It was the "weakness and unsightly decrepitude of the ecclesiasts" which prepared the way for modern thinking.<sup>48</sup> For the Catholic of the eighteenth century the sacrament became the "hateful ensign of human degradation, of fanatical cruelty, of rancorous superstition."<sup>49</sup>

My comment, then, is justified: Morley has used the same vocabulary for which he has expressed his distaste. To be sure, he does not indulge in the "boisterous horseplay of the transcendental humorist," but his expressions too often lack the dignity which we would find in them; nor do they gain in force by means of their violence. I have made the list extensive with a definite purpose in mind; I wish to avoid the charge of having selected a few detached phrases as the basis of a generalization. Morley, writing in 1888, states: "Of course it is easy enough to fish out a sentence or a short passage here or there, which, if taken by itself, may wear a very sinister look, and carry the most alarming impressions." Certainly the number of references just given is not open to the charge implied in "here or there." Morley admits that there were many needlessly aggressive passages which ought to have been omitted because they gave pain to good people; but he sees no reason to depart from any of the opinions which are stated in the passages. "There may have been a too eager tone; but to be eager is not a very bad vice at any age under the critical forty."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, pp. 140-141. See, also, Diderot, vol. 1, p. 198.

<sup>46</sup> Cromwell, p. 371.

<sup>47</sup> Voltaire, pp. 223-224.

<sup>48</sup> Diderot, vol. 1, p. 151.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*, p. 157. See, also, Diderot, vol. 2, p. 205; Voltaire, p. 41; *Miscellanies*, vol. 2, pp. 335-336; Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 254.

<sup>50</sup> *Studies*, pp. 163, ff. See *Valedictory*, Fortn. R., vol. 38, p. 511.

In order to show both sides of Morley's criticism of religion, I shall need to consider his remarks favorable to Christianity. The very writer who was scathing in his comments on the church in the eighteenth century has stated that his French republican friends have accused him of having idealized the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>51</sup> Why? He holds that many of their maxims were immoral, that their malice was pernicious, and that, in the years of their decrepitude, the cupidity of the order was monstrous. Nevertheless, from the Jesuits many men of letters acquired "that practical and social habit of mind" which made the world real to the clergy.<sup>52</sup> It is evident that the members of the order were not ignorant of his more acceptable criticism, and that his efforts to write justly of them prevented what would otherwise have been, on their part, a most natural alienation. He writes in regard to a visit to the Jesuits in Rome: "We parted with the most prodigious compliment ever paid by any Father-general to any Agnostic: 'During the rest of your stay in Rome, your Excellency will be good enough to regard my society as wholly at your command.'"<sup>53</sup>

In the previous chapter I brought out the thought that Morley is not insensible to what he has called the "finer melodies of the soul." I wish to show that in regard to religion, in which the dogmatic attitude is as likely as in poetry to dull the sensibilities, Morley is not without the "instincts of holiness," and that his hostile criticism is directed purely against dogma and church organization.

He admits, for instance,—even maintains—that Catholicism in its earlier form administered to life as a whole, stimulating and satisfying the best instincts of mankind.<sup>54</sup> Protestantism, he states, was a strong liberalizing agent in the eighteenth century, in that it weakened the conception of authority;<sup>55</sup> he even takes occasion to mention the aid which Wesley rendered in opposing the slave trade.<sup>56</sup> Many passages on the religious

<sup>51</sup> *Recollections*, vol. 2, p. 196.

<sup>52</sup> *Diderot*, vol. 1, p. 17.

<sup>53</sup> *Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 38. See, also, *Diderot*, vol. 1, pp. 16 ff., for favorable estimate of Jesuits.

<sup>54</sup> *Diderot* vol. 1, p. 99; *Voltaire*, p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> *Voltaire*, p. 63.

<sup>56</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 4, p. 123.

spirit bear testimony to his sense of its beauty. He defines piety thus: "Resignation and Renunciation—not sullen nor frigid, nor idle nor apathetic, but open, benign, firm, patient, very pitiful and of tender mercy—is not this what we mean by piety?"<sup>57</sup> Holiness: "It is a name for an inner grace of nature, an instinct of the soul, by which, though knowing of earthly appetites and worldly passions, the spirit, purifying itself of these, and independent of all reason, argument, and the fierce struggles of the will, dwells in living, patient, and confident communion with the seen and the unseen Good."<sup>58</sup> It is characteristic of Morley to add at the conclusion of this definition that "we are being drawn into matters that are far too high—for the present writer." In a truly beautiful passage he tells of the inspiration we may derive from the illustrious dead of the Church, even though we have lost faith in their beliefs: "We touch the hands of those who have walked with the most high, and they tell us many moving wonders; we look on faces that have shone in rays from the heaven of noble thoughts; we hear solemn and melodious words from men who received answers from oracles that to us are very mute, but the memory of whose power is still upon us."<sup>59</sup> And continuing this thought elsewhere, he writes that the memory of all those by whom spirituality has been quickened should be cherished; we must learn to see more in men than the outer trappings, for the "spirit of man moves in mysterious ways, and expands like the plants of the field with strange and silent stirrings."<sup>60</sup> He writes with regret of Voltaire's lack of spirituality, and rejoices in the "most priceless excellence of a capacity for veneration" which Rousseau possessed.<sup>61</sup> For the "sublime mystic of the Galilean hills"<sup>62</sup> he has only praise; without the spirituality for which He stood it is impossible to reconstruct society.<sup>63</sup> The only true synthesis is that which unites the reasoning powers of man with spirituality, without derogating from either.<sup>64</sup> The failure of

<sup>57</sup> *Idem*, p. 143.

<sup>58</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 4, p. 144. See, also, Voltaire, p. 242.

<sup>59</sup> Voltaire, p. 275. See, also, *Miscellanies*, vol. 4, p. 93.

<sup>60</sup> Rousseau, vol. 1, pp. 128-129.

<sup>61</sup> *Idem*, p. 196.

<sup>62</sup> *Idem*, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Voltaire, p. 350.

<sup>64</sup> Rousseau, vol. 2, p. 276.

Christianity is clear to Morley. The religion of Christ remains to be tried, but the form will be so changed that the new religion will deserve another name.<sup>65</sup>

A brief comment on the situation just presented. We have found much hostile criticism from Morley of organized Christianity, and, on the other hand, an expression of deep feeling for things of the spirit. The attempt at a balance, however, in which opposition to the Church is weighed against an appreciation of spirituality and of the Church's part in fostering it, should not blind us to the quite obvious violation of one of the maxims which Morley wished to enforce. I refer to the matter of broad judgments, and the necessity of restraint in criticizing institutions to which we may be opposed. And the virtue of such a restraint is the more apparent in the present instance because Morley elsewhere, as a critic of literature, has so generally found the middle way. Clearly he has departed from the standard set up by Mill, the teacher whom he willingly followed in matters of thought. He has introduced unnecessary animosity into his criticisms of the Church to such an extent that his comments are a dissonance in the writings of one from whom, if precept and example had prevailed, a calmer and more recollected judgment were more appropriate.

I have been led into a long discussion, which has considerable interest. I return to Morley's essay on Carlyle. One reason for its hostile turn, I have stated, is Morley's dislike of Carlyle's dogmatic and intolerant morality. But this is not the full explanation. His opposition to Carlyle, in so far as he was opposed to him, is due to his belief in the necessity of an ordered and disciplined method in the criticism of social phenomena.

Morley's position may be briefly stated. In mental discipline alone lies the renovation of England; without it, sweeping generalities and invective, no matter how much truth they may contain, must depend on mood and time for their recognition. To be made permanently useful, broad criticism must be supported by fact clarified in the light of an ordered intelligence. There must be an organization of the faculties, or we shall in no way recover from that anarchy of the intellect which is traceable to Rousseau. He recognizes that, in an age when

<sup>65</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 2, pp. 335-336.

faith has been bitterly attacked and in great measure overthrown, there will be much disordered groping after something to satisfy the longings of mankind; but he refuses to admit the necessity for such disordered groping. To the lack of honest deliberation he attributes the current hypocrisy in religion and in politics; the cant against which Carlyle wrote could be dissipated only by an ordered attack. It is thus that he sums up the result of attempting to reform by means of emotional expansiveness: "A hostile observer of bands of Carlylites at Oxford and elsewhere might have been justified in describing the imperative duty of work as the theme of many an hour of strenuous idleness, and the superiority of golden silence over silver speech as the text of endless bursts of jerky rapture, while a too constant invective against cant had its usual effect of developing cant with a difference."<sup>66</sup>

Morley indicates his hostility still further by means of a comparison of Carlyle and Rousseau. To Morley, as to many another, Rousseau was the great example of the "dangerous sophistry of the emotions"; Carlyle fulfilled for the nineteenth century the functions of Rousseau.<sup>67</sup> "With each of them thought is an aspiration, and justice a sentiment, and society a retrogression. Each bids us look within our bosoms for truth and light, postpones reason to feeling, and refers to introspection and a factitious something styled Nature, questions only to be truly solved by external observation and history." Rousseau's books, Morley continues, lay on the table of the Committee of Public Safety; Carlyle has fostered a love for the battlefield, for repression, a contempt for human life, and a distaste for orderly solution. "We begin with introspection and the eternities, and end in blood and iron." Rousseau anathematized the science of his day; Carlyle has denounced logic mills, and subordinated the discipline of the mind to a passionate assertion of the will. To Carlyle the dictates of a kind heart are of more worth than the maxims of political economy; he has thrust away the only means by which we

<sup>66</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. I, p. 136.

<sup>67</sup> "An apology is perhaps needed for mentioning a man of such simple, veracious, disinterested, and wholly high minded life, in the same breath with one of the least sane men that ever lived. Community of method, like misery, makes men acquainted with strange bedfellows". *Idem*, p. 147.



may make sure of the right and come to an understanding of wise and effective social action. With each, impotent unrest is followed by what is socially an impotent solution. Neither has an organizing policy, although Rousseau does aim at unity by thinking of man as part of a collective whole. Carlyle on the other hand lays all the emphasis on the separatist instincts; for him the individual stands alone in the face of the Eternities; between these and the soul exists the one central relation. Such a teaching "has all the fundamental egotism of the doctrine of personal salvation, emancipated from fable, and varnished with an emotional phrase." The gospel of self-renunciation, Morley states, is by none so favored as by the well-to-do; a private liturgy for them might be composed from Carlyle's sentences. Meanwhile, they forget his denunciations of Beaver Industrialisms. Therein for Morley lies the evil of an emotional teacher; readers take only as much as they please from him, while with a reasoner they either accept or reject by reason, and do not select by simple choice. Admitting that Carlyle was the "friendly fire-bearer who first conveyed the Promethean spark," Morley nevertheless believes that the readiness to exhort and rebuke, and the excessive interest about the soul might with profit have been converted into care for the head.

So far, then, we have found that Morley is opposed to Carlyle's dogmatism and to his lack of ordered thinking. Another reason for Morley's disapproval is, as we should expect, an antipathy to hero-worship. This is only another form to Morley of the anthropomorphic conception of deity, and leaves out of consideration the efforts of the masses. One of the finest passages in his writings is that in which he takes exception to this worship of the successful individual. Carlyle, he states, summons us "to trim the lamp of endeavour at the shrine of heroic chiefs of mankind. In that house there are many mansions, the boisterous sanctuary of a vagabond polytheism. But each altar is individual and apart, and the reaction of this isolation upon the egotistic instincts of the worshipper has been only too evident. It is good for us to build temples to great names which recall special transfigurations of humanity; but it is better still, it gives a firmer nerve to purpose and adds a finer holiness to the ethical sense, to carry ever with us the unmarked, yet living tradition of the voice-

less unconscious effort of unnumbered millions of souls, flitting lightly away like showers of thin leaves, yet ever augmenting the elements of perfectness in man, and exalting the eternal contest."<sup>68</sup> In a tone less mild and in phrases not so poetic he writes elsewhere<sup>69</sup> that the "boisterous old notion of hero-worship which has been preached by so eloquent a voice in our age, is after all now seen to be a half-truth, and to contain the less edifying and the less profitable half of the truth." Again, he writes<sup>70</sup> that historical hero-worship after Carlyle's fashion is a mood which anyone who has been under the influence of Mill must find uncongenial. How, he asks, are we to know the aristocracy of the best unless we have been taught respect for intellectual truth? Morley doubts whether anyone has ever learned from Carlyle the "precious lesson of scrupulosity and conscientiousness in actively and constantly using the intelligence."<sup>71</sup> Hero-worship enthrones the successful man; right and wrong are dependent on success and failure; the end justifies the means. Carlyle, like Providence, is on the side of big and victorious battalions. To him, virtue and success, justice and victory, merit and triumph are identical. The view, Morley writes, is anachronistic and takes us back to prehistoric times.

Moreover, Morley opposes Carlyle's veneration of the successful man with the statement, frequently found in his writings, that the best adherents of a fallen standard are usually next in all good qualities to those who have been successful. The test of worth to Morley, as it was to J. S. Mill, is not so much the triumph of an opinion, nor even the opinion itself, as the manner which a person adopts in holding to his opinion. We have seen some evidence of Morley's unwillingness to condemn quickly those who have strayed incidentally or even recurrently from straight paths; it is equally true that he refuses to acclaim without qualification those who have met with long-continued favor. The question to be decided is not so much what a man has done, as what have been his aspirations and the method of his conduct.

The true test of a hero to Morley, then, is this: "Does your

<sup>68</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 190-191.

<sup>69</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, pp. 34-35.

<sup>70</sup> *Studies*, p. 179.

<sup>71</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 157.

hero's achievement go in the pathological or the moral direction?" In other words, is his standard that of the natural, primitive life, or of the more civilized, social existence? If the former, then the hero will tend to spread cunning, violence and force, instead of respect for the law, for the pledged word, for the habit of self-surrender to the public good.<sup>72</sup> Carlyle's teaching leads to the idolatry of the soldier, to whom forces are of paramount importance, and principles of no moment. It is easy, but short-sighted to "plant an iron heel and call it order." Carlyle should have chosen for his hero as man of letters one whose habit of thought would have led men to exercise their reason, one from whom men might learn the worth of discipline. Morley, accordingly, would substitute Lessing for Rousseau.<sup>73</sup>

We should notice in connection with Morley's criticism of hero-worship his discussion of Emerson's doctrine of the individual. Emerson, he states, coming from the intuitional camp, believes that any interference by the will vitiates our moral nature. Here again Morley finds the doctrine of regeneration by grace. The guide to conscience is the indwelling light; although Emerson differs from the theologians in not tracing either of these gifts to the choice and intervention of a Deity. The strength to conquer temptation is not so noble as impulsive innocence; natural emotions are better than voluntary ones. "In all this Emerson suffers from the limitations that are inseparable from pure spiritualism in all its forms. As if the spiritual constitution were ever independent of the material organization bestowed upon the individual at the moment when he is conceived, or of the social conditions that close about him from the instant of his birth."<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, Morley finds some value in Emerson's teaching on this point; unlike Carlyle, Emerson does not believe that the only forces worth talking about are self-will, mastery, and violent strength, but emphasizes the value of the emancipated individual.

<sup>72</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 172.

<sup>73</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, p. 165. Note that Rousseau was not Carlyle's first choice; Carlyle admits that Rousseau is "from a far inferior state of circumstances," but that, in the existing condition of knowledge, it would be "worse than useless" to write about one whom he preferred—Goethe. (*Hero as Man of Letters*.)

<sup>74</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 332.

Morley's appreciation of Emerson is one more point that establishes his liberality of judgment. Emerson is not a systematic thinker; he comes furthermore from a school opposed to rationalism. Morley does not reject his teaching because of this opposition, but, on the contrary, takes a sympathetic interest in his writings. Let us grant, he says, that Emerson was not a systematic thinker, that he was inconsistent on principle; nevertheless, we must admit that the realm of thought is so large that any glimpse of hidden matters should be cherished. If we reject Emerson because he was not a logician, we shall miss the secret of most of those who have given powerful impulses to the spirituality of an age. Then we have this worthy admission: "It is not a syllogism that turns the heart towards purification of life and aim; it is not the logically enchained propositions of a sorites, but the flash of illumination, the indefinable accent, that attracts masses of men to a new teacher and a high doctrine. The teasing ergoteur is always right, but he never leads nor improves nor inspires."<sup>75</sup>

The attraction which any discussion of sociological problems has for Morley is independent of the medium of expression, be the form that of philosophic essay, biography, or novel. His interest is first in thought, and in the second place only, in form. I shall leave his essays on Carlyle and Emerson, then, in order to notice briefly his criticisms of George Eliot, Harriet Martineau, and Mark Pattison.

Morley's criticism of George Eliot is discriminating. He approves the goal which she set herself: "the rousing of the nobler emotions which make mankind desire the social right."<sup>76</sup> He believes, however, that the scientific quality of her work stood in the way of her aim; her insistence on the limitations which the past lays in the path of advancement is stronger in her than the desire to press on to whatever improvement may be within reach. And yet, in spite of "tiresome double and treble distillations of phraseology, in spite of fatiguing moralities, gravities and ponderosities," she was one of the most heroic women in history. Morley wishes more of the "Olympian serenity that makes action natural and repose refreshing," but is impressed with the edification of her life and her fel-

<sup>75</sup> *Idem*, pp. 335-336.

<sup>76</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, p. 126.

lowship with lofty thoughts. She was more austere than Mill, more unflinching, and "of ruder intellectual constancy." Such qualities made her a great moral force.

Akin to the sympathy which Morley evinces for George Eliot is his appreciation of the work of Harriet Martineau. The qualities praised are those which we should expect Morley to praise—strong moral courage, steadfast devotion to the uplift of mankind, and a positivistic approach to the study of sociology.

Likewise Morley, the rationalist, criticizes Mark Pattison. The criticism is harsh, but Pattison was of a type to arouse Morley to severe criticism. Anyone who has read the *Memoirs* of Pattison has been impressed by the bottomless despair of the author. How strange it is, for example, to read of one who had abundant opportunities for cultivating the society of the learned and the famous: "I have seen no one, known none of the celebrities of my own time intimately or at all, and have only an inaccurate memory for what I hear." As we read on, the impression deepens that here indeed is a man without hope; he laments his boorishness because he acted like a rustic in the presence of his fellow students or of his tutors; he could assimilate but little of his reading, "there was no mind there." It is not a matter of surprise therefore that Morley is severe in his criticism. No one, he writes, can realize the extent of Pattison's impotence who has not sat on a committee with him; there was a weakness of the will, a lack of self-confidence, and a pessimism that appalled his fellow members. Morley quotes Pattison's remark to Morison: "Yes, let us take our worst opinions of ourselves in our most depressed mood. Extract the cube root of that, and you will be getting near the common opinion of our merits." He lacked faith in human progress; while admitting the advances in science and its industrial applications, he doubted whether "our social and moral advance toward happiness and virtue" was cognizable.

I have been brief in my discussion of these essays; my purpose has been solely to show that Morley has criticized Eliot, Martineau, and Pattison from the point of view of rationalism. More material could be given, but the essays are not among the best that Morley has written; and even a brief analysis suffices to show his position.

Let us turn from these essays to Morley's criticism of Macaulay. The former show Morley as a meditator on human destinies; the latter reveals him as a critic of style. Morley praises Macaulay's ability to write on a wide range of subjects. "His essays are as good as a library; they make an incomparable manual and vademecum for a busy uneducated man." Macaulay's appeal to Morley lies in his treatment of the "commonplace," that is, of the "fine truisms that cluster around love of freedom and love of native land."<sup>77</sup> "His unanalytical turn of mind kept him free of any temptation to think of love of country as a prejudice, or a passion for freedom as an illusion." The international idea of such teachers as Cobden would have found point blank opposition and denial from him. He was in "exact accord with the common average sentiment of his day on every subject on which he spoke"; every writer who would be enrolled in the temple of contemporary fame must, like Macaulay, pay worship to popular idols. He had no desire to inculcate new beliefs in the minds of his contemporaries, nor did he introduce any new thought. We are always sure that if Macaulay had been an Athenian citizen he would have sided against Socrates at the time of his impeachment. His ascendancy is due to literary pomp, and not to fecundity of spirit. "No one has ever surpassed him in the art of combining resolute and ostentatious common sense of a slightly coarse sort in choosing his point of view, with so considerable an appearance of dignity and elevation in setting it forth and impressing it upon others." He did not have even the rudimentary germ of meditation. Man cannot live by analysis alone, Morley admits, but he maintains that Macaulay has lost many opportunities for recording images and suggestions which light up a range of distant thoughts and sympathies in the reader.

From these quotations we may more easily follow the main thought of the essay: that the style of an author is the result of his method of thinking. Let us not imagine, Morley states, that it is a matter of little importance whether Macaulay affects a *style coupé* or a *style soutenu*. The critic of style is not the "dancing master declaiming on the deep ineffable things that lie in a minuet. He is not the virtuoso of supines

<sup>77</sup> See *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 268 ff. for definition of "commonplace" in Shakespeare.

and gerundives.”<sup>78</sup> The critic's task is to understand how Macaulay set his stamp not only on the mechanisms of writing, but on its organology—the relation of style to ideas and feeling.

If, Morley continues, our public writers owe most of their virtues to Mill, then they owe most of their vices to Macaulay; if the one taught them to reason, to be patient and tolerant, the other encouraged “oracular arrogance, and a rather too thrasonical complacency.” Macaulay “trained a taste for superficial particularities, trivial circumstantialities of local colour, and all the paraphernalia of the pseudo-picturesque.”<sup>79</sup> The trenchancy of statement which is one of Macaulay's characteristics is effective for a large public; but to those “who reflect how delicate is the poise of truth,” the writer who never lapses into the contingent, who “marches through the intricacies of things in a blaze of certainty,” is sure to display a doubtful and displeasing style. I must quote a few lines of a valuable passage: “It is a great test of style to watch how an author disposes of the qualifications, limitations, and exceptions that clog the wings of his main proposition. The grave and conscientious men of the seventeenth century insisted on packing them all honestly along with the main proposition itself, within the bounds of a single period. Burke arranges them in tolerably close order in the paragraph. Dr. Newman, that winning writer, disperses them lightly over his page. Of Macaulay it is hardly unfair to say that he despatches all qualifications into outer space before he begins to write, or if he magnanimously admits one or two here and there, it is only to bring them the more imposingly to the same murderous end.”<sup>80</sup>

I present, without comment, further remarks by Morley. It is because Macaulay's interests and intuitions lack profundity that the expression of them is characterized by volubility rather than by volume. Likewise with his expressions that are intended to be humorous—they have no deep root in moral nature, and are as a result merely literary forms. The very want of thought which gives his writings directness, clearness, and positiveness, is responsible for his over-weeningness and

<sup>78</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 261.

<sup>79</sup> *Idem*, p. 257.

<sup>80</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 277-278.

self-confident will. His music is that of a silver trumpet; his sentences are not a clinging vestment to his thought, but a suit of armor. He has replenished the lamp of knowledge with naphtha instead of with fine oil. His writing is a sort of "glorified newspaper reporting." There is an excess of color. He is frequently vulgar, discordant to the fastidious ear, and at enmity with the whole spirit of truth.

---

In the essay on Macaulay Morley has expounded with elegance and skill the principle that style is dependent on modes of thought. There can be no better approach to the treatment of his own literary style. Though he is not one of the most winning critics, yet all his writings excite the interest that we feel in reading what has evidently been inspired by the carefully matured convictions of an honest man. If his style often lacks charm, it has solid worth and is the genuine expression of his philosophy.

To judge his style fairly we should keep in mind several points. The first is, that in spite of the influence of his school, Morley has ratiocinated himself into mysticism. He is not the ethereal mystic, lost in contemplation of themes remote from terra firma; but (if I may) the mystic of rationalism who has evolved by a study of history a belief in unseen forces, in progress, and a faith in mankind. On these he meditates. That attitude explains many passages which, because of their other-worldliness and their indications of a faith, seem incidental to the general tone of his work. The decided metaphysical bias in Morley has inspired much of what is tender in tone, cadenced in measure, and lofty in thought of his writing. In this superior style there are no long continuous passages in his work; the predominance of positivism is not conducive to sustained eloquence. But we are grateful for his occasional leavening of the thought, and appreciate the form in which he has given expression to his faith.<sup>81</sup>

We should also remember the particular type of feeling which he displays. Emotional pyrotechnics are quite lacking in his work. There is, however, an intellectual ardor which possesses him, and which, being based on conviction, is not subject to the passing whim nor readily evanescent. I have

<sup>81</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, pp. 35-36; 37-38; *Voltaire*, pp. 274-275, 279-280; *Rousseau*, vol. 2, pp. 232-233, 278.



referred to his belief that spontaneity is consistent with form and order. Such a statement could come only from one who had so assimilated the methods of science that they had become to him an habitual guide and stimulus, instead of an inhibition. If depth of feeling rather than exuberance may be considered as the true cause of spontaneity, then Morley's style may not infrequently be accredited with this virtue.

Furthermore, let us not forget his unwillingness to accept form as of first importance. Morley has stated that style was less dear to him than it was to Plutarch,<sup>82</sup> and in his last published work he writes: "As to literary form I took too little thought, only seeking Correctness. And that after all is its prime essential. In the verbal curiosity condemned by Milton as toilsome vanity I had little interest. I was inclined respectfully to go with Montaigne, who laughed at fools who will go quarter of a league to run after a fine word."<sup>83</sup> We shall be very far from the truth, however, if we assume that this respectful accompaniment has given to Morley's style the same conversational facility for which Emerson has praised Montaigne. A sceptic may suitably adopt the style of easy discourse, but an agnostic is forced, even as his thinking is more rigid, to express himself formally. We are pleased with Montaigne when he writes that his guide in the arrangement of his material is chance, that he piles up his thoughts as they come to him, and that, although he would like a more complete knowledge of things, he is unwilling to pay the price. But by the nature of his philosophic position, Morley could not assume such an attitude. He is openly opposing accepted thought; and opposition cannot be proffered in a self-depreciatory manner, nor in tones suitable to the easy chair. Morley never relaxes his hold on the reader, because he himself has been untiring in his insistence on principles which to him are fundamental. The reader may be rebellious, he may be antagonistic and reject utterly premises as well as conclusions, but he must defend his position by counter arguments and not offer mere antipathies.

Morley's style, then, shows clearly the influence of his philosophy. That influence is not to be noted in any mechanical arrangement of sentences so much as in general tone. He has

<sup>82</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 315.

<sup>83</sup> *Recollections*, vol. 1, p. 93.

not deemed it necessary to follow Comte's curious example of restricting his sentences to "two lines of his manuscript or five of print," or "every paragraph to seven sentences."<sup>84</sup> He will not yield to the lure of form, even though the particular methods of Comte lead to more ordered thinking and increase clarity of expression. On the contrary, whatever precision, clarity, and strength Morley's style has, result inevitably from his method of thought. As he thinks, so he writes.

I have insisted throughout these pages that matters of detail are of little importance to Morley compared with matters of thought. This is of course a sound principle, both of thought and of style. It has a special application, however, in Morley's case, which may or may not have been favorable to his literary success, but has at least tended to limit the size of his audience. He has always kept to the fore the principles which his characters championed, and the relation of those principles to the general current of thought; he has therefore used but scantily the common details of daily life. Byron as a liberalizer of thought is so important that Byron as the owner of Newstead Abbey is not considered; the essay on Carlyle relegates dates to the secondary position of a footnote; and when, as in the essays on Wordsworth and Emerson, the author reverts to the ordinary type of biography, we feel that the true Morley note is missing. He is unwilling to utilize material that would reveal his characters as they were among men; he tells of their opinions and of their place in the history of thought; but how they walked on earth is of little interest. When he does describe, we feel confident, however, that he has not departed from established fact. When he tells us of the famished Condorcet's demand for a dozen eggs in an omelette, we are certain that Morley has not been mistaken in the number; we give credence to his statement that Robespierre on trial wore a "coat of violet-blue silk" and "white nankeens." These facts the reader accepts because he knows that Morley is cautious. And Morley has methodically curbed the imagination; there is no attempt to reconstruct scenes in the favorite manner of Macaulay.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Mentioned by Morley, *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 261-262. See Stephen, *English Utilitarians*, vol. 1, pp. 137 ff. for an interesting account of Horne Tooke's study of philology as an aid to his nominalism.

<sup>85</sup> See *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, p. 122: "There is a legend that in the

Just as Morley has not been concerned with the personal details of his characters, so, too, he has been restrained in revealing himself. We desire to see our teachers, but he has not heeded the desire, and has been particularly retiring. Something we see of him in the essay "A Few Words on French Models," and something less in the essays on Greg and Pattison; the Recollections, also, give a little personal information. There are occasional references to Mill, "my master," and to those who influenced Morley and his college mates at Lincoln. But in general what we know of his personality has been comprehended by the intellect; he is a teacher whom we neither see nor touch.

Morley has mentioned that Macaulay failed to make use of the many opportunities which a writer has to pause for reflection on the destiny of mankind, on the value of life and of individual effort. His own essays illustrate the evil attendant on too much zeal in introducing such moral asides. Narrative is too frequently interrupted by reflections. We learn, for example, in a discussion of the marital relations of the Cromwell family, that "Marriage and time hide strange surprises";<sup>86</sup> an account of a battle is concluded with "Where the purpose is lofty and unselfish, this is indeed moral greatness."<sup>87</sup> In an interesting passage on Rousseau's relations to the city of Geneva we are treated to an analysis of the quality of reverence.<sup>88</sup> An account of the life of Comte ends with a reflection on the impatience which shortness of life breeds in men to hurry on projects for which the time is not ripe.<sup>89</sup> The many interspersed qualifications and asides indicate definitely Morley's habit of thought. His partiality to aphorisms shows his fellowship with rationalists. My personal objection to the gratuitous aphoristic statement, so far as there is an objection, is that it takes the mind of the reader from the immediate subject in hand, and leads his thought to more abstruse mat-

evening Robespierre walked in the Champs Élysées with his betrothed, accompanied as usual by his faithful dog, Brout. They admired the purple of the sunset, and talked of a glorious tomorrow. But this is apocryphal. The evening was passed in no lover's saunterings, but amid the storm and uproar of the Club."

<sup>86</sup> Cromwell, pp. 13-14.

<sup>87</sup> *Idem*, p. 305.

<sup>88</sup> Rousseau, vol. I, pp. 195-197.

<sup>89</sup> Miscellanies, vol. 3, pp. 359-360.

ters. Morley's use of aphorisms bears out this comment. Nevertheless, while not graceful, they are forceful; and what they lose in grace is, to a rationalist, compensated by the gain in precision. They express concisely his favorite thoughts; they are the texts of his message.

Perhaps it is to the dogmatic attitude of Morley that we are to trace the presence of another defect, the excessive use of general statements. We read that "Nobody has ever taken the responsibilities of literature more ardently in earnest than George Eliot";<sup>90</sup> that "nobody had in him less of the Stoic than Machiavelli";<sup>91</sup> that "nobody was ever more diligent in putting" his material to use than Voltaire;<sup>92</sup> that "the English have never been less insular in thought and interest than they were in the seventeenth century."<sup>93</sup> The occurrence of "everybody knows" is also obnoxious, and of no more meaning than Macaulay's phrase about the precocious schoolboy.

So serious in tone and, in general, didactic is Morley's writing, that the reader is occasionally surprised by the use of an element not related to this soberer style, the element, namely, of wit, by the introduction of which, well-chosen and timely, Morley knows how to illumine a passage. His wit is not boisterous, and except in rare cases, not playful. It is not incisive at the expense of mankind; Morley is not the Laughing Abderite. In this respect he is at his best in the essays on Byron, Macaulay, and Carlyle.<sup>94</sup>

A brief word in conclusion. By virtue of the range of his sympathies and his avoidance of extremes, Morley has attained to the position of a classicist; there is much of the repose of the golden mean in his writing. Thus, for example, while insisting on mental discipline, he has not become drily dialectic, and has recognized that systematic thinking alone is not sufficient. The affections are essential to him. He can plead for individual expansion, and yet realize the dangers of throwing off all shackles. Still further, he has interested him-

<sup>90</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 3, p. 110.

<sup>91</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. 4, p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Voltaire, p. 303.

<sup>93</sup> *Cromwell*, p. 42.

<sup>94</sup> See, also, *Miscellanies*, vol. 1, pp. 7-8; also, "A Few Words on French Models," *Studies*, pp. 156 ff; Justin McCarthy (*Outlook*, vol. 72, pp. 295 ff) testifies to Morley's keen sense of humor.

self not only in positivistic writers but in the poets of the Romantic Movement as well. The "equal ordering of reason and affections" with one another has rid his writing of undue systematization, moderated his emotional display, and humanized his thinking.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

(1) Editions of Lord Morley's works used:

- Burke, Edmond, *A Historical Study*—London, Macmillan and Co., 1867.  
 Cobden, Richard, *The Life of*—Boston, Roberts Brothers, 1881.  
 Cromwell, Oliver—New York, The Century Company, 1902.  
 Diderot and the Encyclopaedists, 2 vols.—London, Macmillan and Co., 1886.  
 Gladstone, William Ewart, *The Life of*, 3 vols.—New York, Macmillan and Co., 1903.  
 Miscellanies, Critical, vol. 1—London, Macmillan and Co., 1893.  
   " 2— " " " " 1886  
   " 3— " " " " 1886  
   " 4— " " " " 1908  
 On Compromise " " " " 1888  
 Politics and History, Notes on—London, Macmillan and Co., 1914.  
 Rousseau—2 vols.—London, Chapman and Hall, 1873.  
 Recollections—2 vols.—New York, Macmillan and Co., 1917.  
 Studies in Literature—London, " " " 1920.  
 Voltaire ..... " " " 1896.  
 Walpole ..... " " " 1890.

(2) Works, not by Lord Morley, referred to in thesis:

- Brunetière, Ferdinand—*L'Évolution des Genres dans L'Histoire de la Littérature*—2 vols., Librairie Hachette et Cie., 1898.  
 Mill, John Stuart—*Autobiography*, New York, Henry Holt and Company, 1874.  
 ———. *Dissertations and Discussions*, 2 vols., London, John W. Parker and Son, 1859.  
 ———. *Letters of*—2 vols.—London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1910.  
 ———. *On Liberty* (Everyman edition).  
 Stephen, Leslie—*The English Utilitarians*, 3 vols., New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900.  
 Symond, J. H.—*Essays, Speculative and Suggestive*, 2 vols.—London, Chapman and Hall, 1890.

(3) Periodicals of interest:

- Atlantic, 108: 805 ff—Morley as an Author—G. M. Harper.

- Contemporary, 17:319—Mr. John Morley's Essays—Robert Buchanan  
 72:368—Mr. John Morley—Norman Hapgood.
- Dial, 7:40—John Morley (review of collected works, 1886)—anon.
- Fortnightly R., 1:43 —The Influence of Rationalism—George Eliot.  
 2:469—The Positivist Problem—Frederic Harrison.  
 3:385—Auguste Comte—George Lewes.  
 11:653—The Scientific Aspects of Positivism—Th. Huxley.  
 11:406—Mr. Huxley on M. Comte—Richard Congreve.  
 14:118—The Fortnightly Review and Positivism—John Morley.  
 38:511—Valedictory—John Morley.  
 70:249—Mr. John Morley—anon.
- London Qu. R., 122:36—Lord Morley and the Christian Faith—Rev. Geo. Jackson.
- Nation, 68:103—John Morley's Warnings—anon.
- Outlook, 72:295—John Morley—Justin McCarthy.  
 75:800—Writer and Statesman—anon.
- Quarterly R., 168:249—Mr. John Morley's Collected Writings—anon.
- R. of R., 30:548—Mr. Morley and Mr. Bryce in America—anon.
- Sat. R., 59:409—A Conservative Mr. John Morley—anon.  
 87:69—Mr. Morley Strikes—anon.
- Sewanee R., 26:485—Lord Morley's Recollections—Sidney Gunn.
- Westm. R., 154:117—John Morley—Thomas Bowran.

(4) Other collateral reading of interest:

- Benn, A. W.—The History of English Rationalism in the Nineteenth Century—2 vols.—London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906.
- Comte, Auguste—Discourse on the Positive Spirit—trans. by E. S. Beesly—London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1903.
- . The Catechism of Positive Religion—trans. by Richard Congreve, London, Longmans, Green, and Co., 1883.
- Cecil, Algernon—Six Oxford Thinkers, London, John Murray, 1909.
- Harper, G. M.—John Morley and Other Essays—Princeton, N. J., Princeton University Press, 1920.

- Lecky, W. E. H.—History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe—2 vols., D. Appleton and Company, 1866.
- More, Paul Elmer—A New England Group and Others; Shelburne Essays, Eleventh Series, Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1921.
- Sidgwick, Henry—The Methods of Ethics, London, Macmillan and Co., 1913.

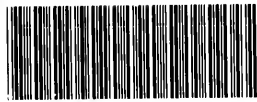








LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 014 526 094 2 ●